

**Revised**

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, June 26, 2019 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, Durham, Connecticut.

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

Board members absent: Mr. Augur and Mrs. Geraci

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

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Hicks added New Business, Item D, Vote on food option and Item E, Vote on beverage options and under item 14B, add Discussion of possible action regarding the employment of the Superintendent.

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to amend the agenda, as above.*

*In favor of approving the agenda, as amended: Mrs. Caramanello, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

**Public Comment**

Carl Stoup read a letter to the Board from Chuck Stengel: "Members of the Board of Education: Over the past few years, I have witnessed the Board struggle with declining enrollment, student educational paths, classroom utilization, student school building transition and financial constraints. I find it hard to believe that we are on the cusp of spending approximately \$1 million to raze the former Korn School and spend several million to add classrooms to Brewster School and dispose of Lyman School. In my opinion, the use of State aid for additional classrooms, when adequate space already exists on the school campus, would be a misallocation of precious resources. Further, I doubt that members of the community would support bond initiatives which fund both the demolition of a school and addition of classrooms if they understood that both initiatives were associated with the passing of the bond resolution. It is my opinion that the projections for declining enrollment do not adequately address the demographic shifts that will play out in the next decade as older, low-cost, single-family homes presently occupied by baby boomers come to the market. I am opposed to your singular consideration of razing Korn School. The issue of Korn School should be considered holistically. I propose, for your consideration, that Korn School be reopened to accommodate the educational needs of Regional School District 13 during a transition period post the closing of Lyman. Further, the building's extra space could be utilized to accommodate community needs, PreK education and childcare. Chuck Stengel."

Mr. Stoup added that Korn School could also be used for storage, instead of building a new field storage building. He felt that the field storage building is really meant to become a field house and will probably cost about \$1 million as it is being done in stages. He asked the Board to give some serious consideration to where some of this money is going.

**Approval of Minutes****A. Board of Education regular session meeting - June 12, 2019**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education regular session meeting of June 12, 2019, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education regular session meeting of June 12, 2019, as presented: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

**Next Board Meeting - July 3, 2019 at 6:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School****Progress Toward Strategic Coherence Goals**

Dr. Veronesi explained that she will report under the Superintendent's report as she reported the year end update at the June 12 meeting.

**Committee Reports****A. Student Achievement Committee Meeting - June 13, 2019 (next meeting September 18, 2019)**

Mrs. Petrella reported that they had a very exciting meeting when a number of coaches, interventionists and a team leader presented on several topics, including the summer reading program (which will be graded this year). She reviewed the REHUGOS program for the board and explained that the students will have to do a presentation when they return to school in the Fall. The coaches had all attended a CREC workshop that inspired this program. Students at Strong School will participate in a similar program, also including a presentation. The elementary school students will participate in the Seesaw program and will be graded on habits of mind. The elementary programs include the school mascots as well. She also explained that two of the coaches have invited students to meet with them over the summer. Mrs. Petrella felt that the energy in the room that night was phenomenal and they really appreciated what the coaches bring to the district.

Mrs. Petrella explained that they also reviewed the summer school program which will run from July 8 through August 1, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM, at Brewster School. Approximately 45 students will be attending, with two teachers from Lyman and two teachers from Brewster as well as two coaches who will facilitate the program. Class sizes will be between nine and 12 students.

The committee then reviewed the i-Ready results and explained that there have been dramatic improvements in many cases. She reviewed that the i-Ready program sets goals for students, no matter where they are. Dr. Friedrich added that the i-Ready program provides formative data for each student and the coaches and teachers find it to be much more accessible and understandable than the previous program. The teachers can see what areas each student needs to work on. He added that the test scores are intended to track with SBAC scores and the standards for the test increase each time it is given. Dr. Friedrich felt that the diagnostic data has, in fact, resulted in better scores.

Mrs. Petrella also noted that they are going to work on blinding the information on the Data Dashboard so that the board can look at the data, without student specifics.

Dr. Taylor asked if they got an impression about the amount of time that i-Ready is being administered during class time. Dr. Friedrich stated that they did discuss testing fatigue that factors into the results and they are aware of the issue. Mr. Moore explained that the greatest amount of test fatigue was in May and it hurt the fourth graders who showed very little progress at the end. Dr. Veronesi added that it wasn't just fatigue, but also the volume of assessment that they are looking at. Mr. Roraback stated that Mrs. DiMaggio was open to everyone's opinions and also looking at the schedule of testing.

Dr. Taylor asked what the prior summer program had been and what drove the district to make this change. Dr. Veronesi felt that they were looking at having something that is more engaging for the students and added that there had been no summer reading program at all in some areas. She also noted that students are already sharing on the Seesaw program and it's only four days after school got out. Mrs. Caramanello added that the teachers were very enthusiastic about this and the program is not just for reading.

Dr. Taylor asked how the district is addressing access to the internet for students with these programs and Mr. Moore added that his grandson had raised that same issue. Dr. Veronesi didn't know the answer, but believes that they have partnered with the public libraries for access. Mr. Roraback noted that posting on the internet was not a requirement. He felt that the biggest takeaway was that students need to have something they're passionate about and he feels that student choice is the best part of this.

### **Communication**

Mr. Moore received several communications from Theresa French about before- and after-school care. He also received the letter from Chuck Stengel that Carl Stoup read into the record. Mr. Moore also received a note from Jen Zettergren, Michelle DiMauro, Frances Kelly, Eileen Paul, Nick Faiella, Robin Ryan, Dave Bellemare, Nancy Toth and Sandra Dallas, all in support of the field house.

Mr. Moore reported that he spoke to Mrs. Neubig and Dr. Veronesi about the busing to Wallingford and stated that the district has not bussed out of town except for Vinal. He felt that the board could develop a consensus about this and see if there was interest in providing it. He did feel that they needed to let parents know about this sooner, rather than later. He also added that another option would be to create a before- and after-school program at Korn.

Mr. Yamartino reported that both the Durham and Middlefield Boards of Selectmen have voted in favor of the towns joining the Middlesex Transit Authority and Ed Bailey will ask about the possibility of providing transportation for the district to Wallingford.

It was generally agreed to add this issue to the agenda for the July board meeting.

Mr. Yamartino had emailed several issues to board members and hoped to have discussion about the position at the high school. Mr. Moore agreed that they will do that this summer.

Mr. Moore also reported that he had attended graduation and felt that everyone did a great job. Dr. Veronesi will share Emily Dell'Orfano's speech with everyone electronically as she felt it was probably the best valedictorian speech she's ever heard.

Mr. Hicks read a letter from Sue VanDerzee into the record, dated June 4, 2019: "Dear District 13 Board of Education: We are writing to you with regard to the future of Korn School. Korn School, despite the negative vote in the Durham referendum, appears to be an untapped community resource paid for by the community. To demolish it because of a single vote seems short-sighted in the extreme. As our communities face the challenge of the future, the Korn School building seems particularly suited to be the site of programs for all ages, continued voting, adult education of an academic and practical nature and such novel initiatives as a possible tool library and cooking program. Besides its practical usefulness, the idea of tearing down a piece of history so loaded with emotion as an elementary school may very well come back to haunt the board as they try to convince residents of the need for other programs, renovations at facilities in the future. While there are undoubtedly continuing costs to the district while a plan is set for the building, I urge the district and its representatives to meet with community groups to get a sense of the possibilities that might be realized at this site and, particularly, I urge contact with senior citizens, Durham-Middlefield Youth and Family Services, Durham Garden Club, town government, Coginchaug Valley Education Foundation and Coginchaug Area Transition. Thank you." And it's signed Bernadette Basile, Jennifer Kleindeitz, Rebecca Anderson, Betsy St. John, Nancy Winship-Poole, Allan Poole, Karen Weber, Kathy Weber, Jean Gay and Sue VanDerzee.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Veronesi reported that the valedictorian's remarks at graduation were outstanding and started by stating that as a student she thinks more about how she learned, rather than what she learned. Dr. Veronesi felt that her comments were similar to the Portrait of the Graduate work that has been done, including persistence, choice, financial literacy, critical thinking and community.

Dr. Veronesi stated that the entire administrative team, along with Mr. Rossignol and Mrs. DiMaggio, will join her at Connecticut College for a strategy workshop with the Connecticut Center for School Change. This workshop will last two days and will look at the research on school improvement, and include the instructional rounds practice. Dr. Veronesi reported that this work will assist in building greater alignment in their improvement efforts.

Dr. Veronesi also reiterated that 45 students have enrolled in summer school, 71 special education students will participate in summer school as well and 11 students will be at MTA. She also reported on the Curriculum Institute that took place in district last week and the energy and planning that went into that. SBAC scores are in and they are embargoed until August.

Dr. Veronesi also reported that she met with Sharon Berndt, a former kindergarten teacher at Lyman who will be transferring to Brewster next year, and worked on a HOT approach grant application that will have an impact on the entire district, including funding Christopher Eaves, an artist and consulting HOT approach specialist, to come to be the keynote address at convocation, provide professional development on opening day and proposed some additional professional development as well. Mr. Eaves does a program called Architects and Engineers which is really HOT meets STEAM and also has a program on high level questioning.

Dr. Veronesi emphasized that people in the district want students to feel engaged and alive in their learning and that's how teachers want to feel as well. They want to feel that there is choice and isn't all rigid. She feels that this will be a way to examine that and continue that high level learning and experience for the students. Convocation will be held on Friday, August 23 this year.

**Business Manager's Report**

Mrs. Neubig reported that they are closing out the fiscal year and rolling over to the new year on Friday. The auditors will start their field work next week. The state construction grant applications have been submitted before the June 30 deadline and have been confirmed as received. She does not expect to hear until at least December. If the grants are awarded, bidding cannot start until July 1.

Work started last week on the natural gas line coming from the back of Coginchaug and right on Pickett Lane. Mrs. Gaudreau reported that they are using directional drilling to go under the stream away from the culvert.

Mrs. Neubig also stated that on Friday, June 21, Moody's issued a press release removing the negative outlook on the district which had been placed back in October, 2017. The negative outlook was removed because of conservative budgeting practices by the district, consistent operating performance, the district's low but stable reserve position, the district's declining debt burden, low pension liabilities due to highly-funded pension account and underlying credit quality of the two member towns. The district has a AA3 rating which is the second highest tier and implies very strong credit worthiness. Dr. Veronesi noted that they will share that report with the board members in a couple of weeks. Mr. Yamartino asked if Moody's takes into account that the towns have reserves on behalf of the district and Mrs. Neubig stated that they do. Mr. Moore told a story about an interaction he had with Moody's in the past.

**New Business****A. Vote to accept Food Service and Custodial contracts**

Mr. Moore explained that a summary had been sent out, but that it was a five-year agreement with a reopener for salaries in 2022. Insurance premiums ratchet up each year up to 14 percent and there is a savings of \$21,000 in insurance premiums. The salary adjustments go up by 2.5 percent for the first three years.

Mr. Hicks asked if there were changes to language as he has been unable to receive any emails and Dr. Veronesi explained that there had been minor changes. She also acknowledged both of the unions and their contribution to the district, along with the outstanding work, dedication and commitment from both the food service and custodial staff.

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the agreement between the Board of Education of Regional School District 13 and the Custodians for a contract beginning July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2024.*

*In favor of approving the agreement between the Board of Education of Regional School District 13 and the Custodians for a contract beginning July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2024: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

Mr. Moore reviewed that the agreement with the food service union had basically the same changes and will also be a five-year contract with an opener in 2022, premium increases on insurance and a 2.5 percent salary adjustment each year over the next three years.

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, to approve the agreement between the Regional School District 13 Board of Education and the Food Service employees for a contract beginning July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2024.*

*In favor of approving the agreement between the Regional School District 13 Board of Education and the Food Service employees for a contract beginning July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2024: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

#### **B. Vote to approve final security expenditures**

Mr. Moore reviewed that the Utilization Committee had recommended the expenditures at the last meeting.

*Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the security expenditures as delineated in the Utilization Committee report tendered at the last meeting.*

*In favor of approving the security expenditures as delineated in the Utilization Committee reported tendered at the last meeting: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

#### **C. Vote to consider razing Korn School**

Mr. Moore reviewed that the Utilization Committee had also recommended that the board Vote to consider razing the Korn School building.

*Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to instruct the Utilization Committee to confer with the new Town Planner.*

Dr. Friedrich felt it was important that the Utilization Committee reported to the board that they do not see a way out. Dr. Taylor felt that most people would prefer that decision be delayed but it might be helpful to make a motion. Dr. Friedrich felt it was important that everyone understand that razing the building is an option. He felt that the considerations that led to the high price tag for the Town of Durham apply to the district as well.

Mr. Moore went over that there had been three options for Korn School from the beginning: to sell it to the town, to sell it privately and to remove the building. He felt that, at this point, a whole series of other options have been opened up. A lot of information about uses and costs have been provided by the town and those should be incorporated into the board's decision. Mr. Moore felt that the Utilization Committee should develop a matrix of possible uses and costs.

Dr. Taylor asked who would be driving this process and stated that he has worries of being reliant upon the individual towns to make recommendations about uses, etc. This is ultimately a board decision about how to best effectively utilize the district's resources for their students and he would the board to keep the vision of those responsibilities. He does agree it is a super-complex decision and will not get public buy-in unless it is well thought out. Dr. Taylor would like to see resources being dedicated to this to move this swiftly and done well. He personally doesn't see how the board will cover the approximately \$130,000 to maintain the building.

Mr. Yamartino agreed with Dr. Taylor, however he did not feel that the board has enough resources to handle coming to a final decision. He proposed that a committee be formed, including community members, to run through all of the different options. The Finance Committee could help with the financial end of things. He agreed that the Town Planner could serve on the committee. Mr. Yamartino felt that this should be moved out of the Utilization Committee to its own standalone committee to focus on Korn School because John Lyman will be right behind it. He noted that it would cost \$1 million to raze the building while it costs \$60,000 a year to keep the building moth-balled and he felt that was much better than taking a million-dollar hit right now. Mr. Yamartino stated that he would be dead-set against razing the building, but would want to make sure to form a separate committee to study it.

Dr. Friedrich agreed with that idea and mentioned that Utilization's mission used to be to define space needs for academic programs and has become something totally different. He did not feel that the school administration had any business working on this as it is a community resource, not an educational resource. Mr. Yamartino agreed and added that there are other objectives that they are asking the administration to affect over the next year, including developing the programs and facilitating the movement of students and people into different configurations. He felt that there would be people with different backgrounds, in construction, real estate, commercial real estate leasing that would want to participate. Mr. Yamartino also stated that the district does not have a survey of the property at this point and there are a number of zoning issues associated with it as well.

Mr. Moore suggested that the committee could be set up by the Utilization Committee and the chair could be the chair of this new committee as well. Dr. Friedrich argued that this is not a utilization issue and Mrs. Petrella agreed.

*Both Dr. Friedrich withdrew his motion and Mr. Yamartino withdrew his second.*

Dr. Taylor felt that the mission of the Utilization Committee was to most effectively utilize the buildings and resources within the district and that this would fit under that mission. He would like to strongly push back against the notion that this should move outside of the purview of the Board of Education. This is the board's building and is under the purview of the district. He does not feel that moving the issue to an outside committee would be the right move. Dr. Friedrich mentioned that they would not be giving any authority away. Dr. Taylor felt that the momentum from the committee will be significant and cannot be dismissed. They would, by default, become the decision-making body and he does not like the idea of pushing decisions off into those areas. He does believe the board should dedicate resources to this and not make the administration do it. Dr. Taylor felt that the board should spend money to go to a third party to have them make recommendations and agreed that townspeople could be involved, but felt that it ultimately needed to be under the Board of Education. He thought that this would fall under the board's responsibilities under Connecticut General Statutes.

Dr. Taylor also felt that the board needed to be careful about stating things about the moth-balling vs. the money to raze it. They would ultimately still have to make a decision on the building and would have to spent \$1 million, one way or the other. He would not be opposed to taking a year or two to gather all of the evidence, but did not agree with the notion of not thinking about razing the building because of the \$1 million. He also did not see why a survey would be necessary to raze the building. Dr. Taylor also mentioned that he has never heard discussed about selling the actual property and he would be strongly opposed to that.

Dr. Taylor is strongly in favor of moving forward and coming up with a rubric, dedicating resources to this, getting a clear picture of the options and costs and then making an educated decision. He reiterated

that he strongly feels this should be a board initiative. He would not be opposed to it moving out of Utilization, but would be opposed to having a committee of only one or two board members.

Dr. Veronesi felt that they should clearly state what the outcomes of the process. Dr. Taylor felt that the outcome should be a report that clearly outlines options and not a particular recommendation.

Mr. Yamartino noted that the sale of the property was always an option and a lot of work was done to that end. That was when it was determined that they did not have an A-1 survey and that there could be septic issues with Allyn Brook Park. It almost became impossible to do a private sale because of the way the land is being used currently and the access to it.

Mr. Moore felt that they were back to the original motion to have Utilization move forward evaluating options. There is some money in the budget for consultant services. Dr. Friedrich noted that he and Mr. Yamartino have already withdrawn their motion.

*Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, that the Utilization Committee evaluate all of the options available for utilization of the building as one of the district's resources, including demolition of the building.*

Mr. Yamartino was a little concerned because that same committee has just voted to bring their recommendation to raze the building to the board. A co-chair of the committee made a motion at the last meeting to raze the building. Dr. Taylor asked for trust in the process and he has been transparent tonight to say that a recommendation will not come out of this process, but only a report outlining options and costs. Mr. Yamartino understood and felt it was that same trust that the board does not have for members of the communities to serve on committees. Mr. Moore explained that the full board can also vote any recommendations down.

Dr. Taylor asked that he not be misunderstood about his feelings about community members and that this is only that he feels this is the responsibility of the board. Mr. Yamartino did not feel it would be abdicating responsibilities or giving away any authority, but more of a way of including other people who have varying viewpoints and interests.

Dr. Friedrich noted that he will be looking for a business plan and he would not vote for it without one.

*In favor of having the Utilization Committee evaluate all of the options available for utilization of the building as one of the district's resources, including demolition of the building: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

#### **D. Vote on food options**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to move the following healthy food option pursuant to Connecticut General Statute section 10-215f, the Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias*



*and any fund-raising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or by non-school organizations and groups.*

*In favor of continuing to participate in the healthy food option, as above: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

### **Vote on beverage options**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutritional Standards and beverages not listed in section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes, provided that the following conditions are met: (1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; (2) the sale is at the location of the event and (3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or a school store. An event is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly-scheduled practice, meeting or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays and interscholastic debates are events, but soccer practices, play rehearsals and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the school day. Location means where the event is being held.*

*In favor of allowing food and beverage exemptions, as above: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

Mr. Moore explained that items 13 and 14 still remain, but item 13 is retreat information for the board and item 14 is executive session.

### **Public Comment**

None.

The board took a short recess at this point.

### **Board of Education roles and responsibilities - Peter Maher, Shipman & Goodwin**

Attorney Maher from Shipman & Goodwin distributed copies of materials to the board members. He began by reviewing the roles of the Board of Education and explained that the members are community member volunteers that are elected by the constituents to set policy direction and broad goals and objectives. They do have some statutory authority and responsibilities as well. One of the board's biggest obligations is to hire a superintendent and evaluate that superintendent. That is the single personnel function of the board. Everyone else in the district is evaluated by the superintendent or her designee. Attorney Maher encouraged the board members to always keep in mind whether or not a question they are being asked is a personnel matter that should be referred to the administration or is directly related to the evaluation of the superintendent.

The other big role for the board is as a quasi-adjudicatory body. That may be a student expulsion hearing, a transportation hearing, an appeal by a terminated or non-renewed certified staff member and/or grievances.

A dual responsibility that the board has is to implement the educational interests of the state, as defined by the General Assembly and the other part is to be a community-based body. The board is also the policymaker of the district and that is separate from the actual implementation of the policies.

Attorney Maher then reviewed a hypothetical example for the board members regarding special education services. Mrs. Booth stated that a board of education member has no business looking at students' IEPs. Attorney Maher confirmed that the board members do not have educational interest in individual student records. Mr. Hicks added that the board member has no business interfering with the job of the superintendent. Attorney Maher agreed that a board member cannot meddle in that area. Mr. Roraback added that an individual's actions would then be perceived as those of the entire board. Attorney Maher explained that each person has their own individual rights, but they need to be cognizant of how they represent themselves as an individual or as part of the board. Dr. Friedrich felt that it would be entirely appropriate for that board member to forward the email to the superintendent and Attorney Maher agreed.

Dr. Taylor asked if Attorney Maher would suggest just recommending community members speak directly to the superintendent or other administration and Attorney Maher agreed and felt that the board members do not want to be a conduit. He also reminded everyone that every letter or email that they write becomes public record. While every case is different, Attorney Maher felt that forwarding the information to the proper administrator would be the right thing to do. Dr. Friedrich added that he had done exactly that, but also asked the person to keep him in the loop as he was concerned about the problem. Attorney Maher encouraged board members not to get too deeply involved, but pleasantries are fine.

Attorney Maher stressed that there is a process that has to be followed with personnel concerns and board members need to remain impartial. He then went on to talk about bullying complaints and directed board members to forward the complaint to the superintendent or direct the parent to the website for further information. Regarding student discipline, there are privacy issues and board members would not get involved unless the superintendent has recommended expulsion. Board members do approve graduation requirements as that is a policy function. Attorney Maher gave other hypothetical examples and explained that budgeting issues are the board's responsibility.

As far as the rights of the board members, the board can take action only at meetings, however when they are not at board meetings, the members have the same rights as other citizens. Under the Freedom of Information Act, it would be considered a meeting if there is a quorum present. There are exceptions to that, however. He would not advise the board having small group sessions as it could lead to illegal meetings. Dr. Taylor asked about digital platforms and Attorney Maher stated that the Freedom of Information Commission has held that discussion by a quorum of an entity would constitute an illegal meeting.

Mr. Yamartino asked if members of the board from the specific towns can register as a caucus and meet to discuss issues and Attorney Maher was not able to answer that but will look into it.

Attorney Maher went on to review committees and explained that they are governed by either bylaws of the board or by the charge of the committee. When committees convene, they are a public agency under the Freedom of Information Act and meetings must be posted and rules must be followed. Attorney Maher also pointed out that Connecticut does have an indemnification statute that covers board of education members.

Student records and confidentiality are on a need-to-know basis and for educational interest only. The administration is responsible for handling individual student matters. He reviewed other statutory duties, including budgeting, policy making and negotiations. He explained that there is generally a difference between board of education policy and administrative regulations. Dr. Taylor wondered what the process should be for developing new policy and Attorney Maher felt that many times policy comes directly from the educators who have the expertise or are dictated by statute.

Individual board members do not have the authority to act on behalf of the board, unless they are expressly authorized. Mrs. Caramanello asked if it was okay for individual board members to thank community members for their email because she felt that the town perceives the board members as not caring when they do not respond to emails. Attorney Maher agreed that that is a tough one and advises that there be one designated person to respond because of the concern about it becoming an illegal meeting. The greater concern he would have is background or other facts that may not be included in the message. He does feel it is typical for the chairman of the board to respond on the board's behalf. Mrs. Booth agreed that it is very frustrating when board members don't respond. Mr. Moore felt that the bigger problem was the lack of communication between the board and the public. Dr. Veronesi thought that Mr. Moore could explain that the board would not personally respond and that if everyone responded, it would be an invitation for further input.

Mrs. Booth brought up that community members speak during Public Comment, but the board does not respond. Attorney Maher would not recommend that board members respond at the meeting. Mr. Hicks explained that he does reply to emails and lets the community members know that he reads their email. Attorney Maher again reiterated that he feels it's appropriate that the chairman acknowledge emails sent to the entire board. If the email is sent to just one board member, it would be appropriate for them to acknowledge it and explain that they have forwarded the email to the appropriate person. Mr. Roraback mentioned that many emails come addressed to just one board member, but in fact are sent to everyone. Attorney Maher explained that every time someone responds to an email, it invites dialog and that could lead to issues. Mr. Yamartino suggested that emails be forwarded to the appropriate person with a copy sent to the original sender.

Dr. Veronesi also noted that the board may decide that an issue brought to them by a parent is not appropriate for a board of education discussion. She felt that may lead to the public feeling that the board doesn't care about what is important to them, but those issues may be better addressed through the administration. Attorney Maher mentioned that if a board member writes correspondence, even though they don't have the authority to do so, it will be viewed as coming from the board and may lead to litigation.

Dr. Veronesi suggested that this discussion be continued at a later date and Attorney Maher was willing to come back. Dr. Veronesi explained that CABE holds a Nutmeg Board of Education workshop done by Shipman & Goodwin and encouraged everyone to attend.

Mr. Moore asked if it would be considered a meeting when board members gathered at someone home after a meeting and Attorney Maher explained that the Freedom of Information Act says that a social gathering would not be a meeting, but he would strongly caution the members not to discuss any board business.

**Anticipated Executive Session**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Friedrich, to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing attorney-client privileged communications regarding prohibited practice charge filed by the Regional District 13 Education Association and Board surveys and discussion of possible action regarding the employment of the superintendent.*

*In favor of going into executive session: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

**Adjournment**

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

*In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

Meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First