

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in special session on Monday, April 6, 2020 at 7:00 PM remotely.

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

Board members absent: None

Administration present: Dr. Serino, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance.

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 made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the agenda, as presented.*

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

**Approval of Minutes**

**A. Board of Education regular session meeting March 25, 2020**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the minutes from the March 25, 2020 meeting.*

Mrs. Booth explained that, on page 2, it was Mrs. Caramanello who asked how Mr. Fisher was doing.

*In favor of approving the minutes of the March 25, 2020 meeting, as amended: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.*

**Next Board Meeting - April 22, 2020 at 7:00 PM**

**School Closure Update**

- A. Health Director/Commissioner of Education/Governor Conference Call**
- B. Legislative Changes and Executive Orders**

Dr. Serino explained that the meeting with the health director had been canceled and there has been no recent meeting with the Commissioner. The conference call with the governor contained no real information specific to school districts.

The district has just begun the second week of distance learning and the teachers' union has completed a survey. Mrs. DiMaggio will send out a survey by Thursday of this week to get feedback from parents and staff. There are currently 47 paraprofessionals who all have access to a home device or a

Chromebook. Mr. Pietrasko distributed 14 Chromebooks today to paraprofessionals. Dr. Serino explained that they are also in the process of finalizing all work responsibilities and she will share that information with the board as soon as that is completed. Paraprofessionals are also taking part in professional learning, using the Second Step curriculum. Regular education paraprofessionals have been assigned to each kindergarten class.

They are now looking at end-of-year activities, including grading. Many schools are talking about moving to pass/fail for the fourth quarter with different grade weightings for the four semesters.

Dr. Serino added that the administrative team did meet on Friday and talked about distance learning, well-being and budget. In terms of distance learning, they feel it is going quite well. This week, they are working to finalize the outplacement tuition formula, continuing to look at grading and examining broadening the Google hangout so that teachers are actually face-to-face with students.

In the long-term, they'd like to get feedback from parents, students and staff. Dr. Serino felt that people of all ages are starting to tire of their computer. They need to look at final exams, graduation and potential office hours for teachers. They'd like to be able to form small chat groups and even possibly distribute materials to students. They will also address class placement for next year as well as transition planning.

In terms of well-being, everyone is staying connected, but they are concerned about the frustration level that is building and how important the April break will be. They are concerned about the long-term impact of the stress of the current situation and Mrs. Manning will reach out to Durham-Middlefield Youth and Family Services and CCSU about partnering to support staff, students and families. Dr. Serino reached out to her team this morning and she and Mrs. Stone has started working on how the district will respond in the event of a death of a student, parent, staff or community member. They are also looking at support if any school administrators fall ill.

### **2020-2021 Budget**

Regarding potential budget changes, the administrative team has come up with a list of potential items that can be decreased by addressing at a later date, addressing now, or addressing in another way, including the Brewster gym floor, the Memorial music room carpet, the leased truck for buildings and grounds, softball fence repair, baseball cage, spotlight for the stage, China travel, Photo II class supplies and miscellaneous supplies in all schools. Those equate to roughly \$200,000.

They have been considering an enhanced extended school year (ESY for special education) for the summer and an increase in summer school offerings for students needing intervention services as well. They will obviously have to wait to see if students can get together over the summer or if it will be an extension of distance learning. It may be roughly doubled of what was put into the budget for this year.

Mrs. Geraci asked if they had thought about having ESY in August instead of July. Dr. Serino thought that was a great idea, but they haven't talked about that yet.

Mrs. Neubig explained that the administrative team reviewed areas where surpluses may be available and that anticipated surplus now includes a 20 percent reduction in transportation. Mrs. Neubig has been in contact with an attorney who is generating a memo for the district for Dattco to get a breakdown of salaries and benefits. There are several items that are fixed costs with no possibility for a decrease. She

also looked at increasing costs which include legal fees and a storage cost on pre-purchased fuel. Mrs. Neubig also looked at areas that will contribute to a surplus, including salaries and benefits (\$160,000), athletics (\$123,000), purchased services (\$162,000), supplies (\$210,000), transportation (\$93,000), travel (\$25,000), dues and memberships (\$15,000) and repairs (\$5,000). The current surplus projected is \$794,000, but Mrs. Neubig stressed that this is a fluid number.

Looking at revenue, they are looking at a loss of \$110,000 which includes pre-K tuition, pay-to-participate fees, buildings and grounds rentals, STEAM camp tuition, excess cost grant, parking fees and MTA tuition. The net surplus would be \$683,846 which can be used to help the 2020-2021 budget. The surplus could be immediately applied to the upcoming budget which would help the towns' bottom lines, however there could be unanticipated costs and/or reduced grant funding. Food service could also be running at a deficit, though they can apply for FEMA money for that. Mrs. Neubig would support the board's and Dr. Serino's opinions on how to apply this surplus. She did explain that she would not have presented these numbers if she wasn't comfortable with them, however she cannot know for sure.

Mrs. Neubig has run up to eight different scenarios at this point. Dr. Serino felt comfortable with the proposed decreases she presented earlier with those items to be implemented in the following school year. She did not feel that any of the proposed decreases impact students or student learning. Mrs. Neubig noted that a \$785,000 reduction is needed to get the proposed budget to a zero percent change, so the total of \$883,846 is actually more than necessary. Dr. Serino mentioned that the administrative team did not discuss playgrounds or tennis courts and they are still in the capital budget. Mrs. Neubig noted that the only potential cut to the capital budget was the Brewster gym floor for \$116,000. Mrs. Neubig will send out the various scenarios to the board members.

Mrs. Geraci knew that the playground was a hot topic and asked if a buffer should be added to the capital budget. Mrs. Neubig explained that there is \$50,000 budgeted for Lyman and Memorial has \$100,000. There had been talk about purchasing some equipment for this year out of the Lyman student account, but that doesn't need to happen if the kids are not in school.

Mr. Yamartino reported that the Playground Committee made quite a bit of progress, but have not met since the pandemic. The subcommittee identified a number of different options for Lyman, with a total budget of \$50,000. He did feel that that would provide enough activities for one to three years. At Memorial, they did get a quote of \$105,000 to do all of the courts which would provide a full basketball court, full tennis court, eight pickleball courts and four square courts. In addition, they also looked at some components for the playground at Memorial at about \$70,000. Middlefield's Board of Finance is meeting on Thursday night and Mr. Yamartino is going to attend to explain the playground issue. There is currently \$25,000 in their budget towards the court system at Memorial.

Mr. Yamartino also explained that they have recently received clarification on the budget adoption process from the governor and the Board of Selectmen voted to give the Board of Finance the sole authority to approve the budget. Middlefield's Park and Rec committee is in support of this budget line item as well.

Mr. Yamartino added that the playground subcommittee did have a concern that the courts may not be able to be used during recess or gym. Mr. Yamartino and Dr. Serino were going to meet with Mr. Ford and Mrs. Stone to discuss how it could be integrated, but they have not done that yet. Dr. Serino added that she spoke to the gym teacher and there are standards in the third and fourth grade PE curriculum where the students strike an object with a short-handled paddle and the implementation of game play in fifth grade. The gym teachers were concerned about the current state of the courts and also about boys

who like to try to run and jump over the nets. Dr. Serino did mention that Mr. Barbieri has been trying to implement pickleball since his arrival in the district. If the courts were available at Memorial, students should be able to sign up for those activities during recess and they would just need to be sure there is available adult supervision. Mr. Yamartino added that this could also open up some potential parking spaces as well.

Dr. Serino asked Mr. Yamartino to clarify what the cost would be to the district for the courts and he felt that the district would need to put in \$75,000 to \$80,000 with the Town of Middlefield donating \$25,000. This would make the contribution roughly 50/50 between the two communities. He also noted that Middlefield Park and Rec runs summer camp there and would get a lot of usage out of the facility as well. He thought that the summer camp was split roughly 50/50 between Durham and Middlefield kids.

Dr. Serino asked Mrs. Neubig to confirm that \$75,000 would be directed towards the courts, with \$75,000 to the playground at Memorial and the remaining \$50,000 for Lyman. Dr. Serino does feel it is critically important to focus on play for children at all times but especially in this time as students will be transitioning back to school after an extended absence and

Mr. Yamartino added that he felt that \$50,000 may be light at Lyman and everything they have looked at is more in the area of \$70,000 to \$75,000. He noted that they are including some sensory elements to accommodate students with special needs.

Mrs. Booth agreed that the \$50,000 may not be enough at Lyman. She felt that the equipment for all students is not always included with smaller playscapes. They had talked about getting something around \$50,000 for next year with more the following year. She also noted that they had talked about getting pieces of equipment for Memorial rather than a full playscape based on feedback from the students.

Mr. Yamartino thanked all of the committee members for their hard work and will provide a summary to the board. He explained that they have also been discussing adding additional equipment at Brewster and incorporating the equipment at the high school as well. He asked for feedback from the other board members so that he can give feedback to the Board of Finance.

Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mrs. Caramanella and Mrs. Geraci were all in support. Mrs. Booth hoped that maybe they could get a better deal based on everything going on now.

Mrs. Petrella stated that she does not look at reducing the budget to a specific number, but does consider trying to keep increases as low as possible. She has every confidence in Dr. Serino and the administrative team that they will find ways to cut costs without jeopardizing crucial educational initiatives. Mrs. Petrella trusts that budget cuts will not impact any programs.

Mrs. Booth asked if the administrative team has considered the amount of students who might require interventionists next year and if they think that number will go up. Dr. Serino explained that they have discussed that, but before adding staff they thought about using some of the existing staff in a different manner. For instance, she felt that it may make sense to have coaches work directly with students as well. Another idea they have is to stagger start times so that students can stay after school for different tutorials. Dr. Serino also explained that if students start to fall below goal, they are likely to be able to catch up more quickly. That would make the literacy specialist that much more important to support teachers and students who have been identified with having dyslexia.

Mrs. Geraci asked if they have thought about the budget with regard to a more live platform in the fall if the kids aren't able to return to school. Dr. Serino stated that they have talked about that and noted that some districts are talking about the potential of not returning to school until January. They have not talked about that in terms of implementation yet, but they are on it.

Dr. Friedrich noted that there is a savings involved with not coming back to school and, since they are budgeting to return to school in fall, that money could be available to invest in distance learning, if that is what is needed. Mrs. Neubig agreed that that is possible. Dr. Serino felt that the financial challenge would actually be the lesser challenge to increasing student engagement and personalizing the learning.

Mr. Yamartino stated that he had received a question about the SRO and if that is reflected as part of the savings. Mrs. Neubig explained that he has been reassigned back to patrol as of March 13, 2020 and the district no longer pays for his services. That savings is included in the purchased services line.

Mr. Yamartino felt that a 20 percent reduction in transportation seems low as he wouldn't think salaries and benefits would be 80 percent of their budget, but he asked if there were any opportunities to confirm those numbers. Mrs. Neubig explained that some districts are asking that certified payrolls are provided which can be done through an attorney or an auditor.

Mrs. Geraci asked if the district had received the benefit renewal rate yet and Mrs. Neubig explained that it is 9.5 which is the cap. Claims have been running extremely high.

Mr. Moore has been meeting with other board chairs and one of the issues that is being debated is pass/fail for grades. This is complicated for high school students who are worried about college admissions. There has also been a lot of discussion about doing the Pledge of Allegiance and bus issues as well. They also continue to talk about distance learning from district to district and they all seem to be dealing with the same issues.

Mr. Moore reviewed that they still hope to vote on the budget at either the April 22<sup>nd</sup> or April 29<sup>th</sup> meeting so that it can be sent to the public by May 1<sup>st</sup>, with a formal adoption by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Mrs. Neubig will send out the various scenarios to the board members for review.

Dr. Serino added that Mrs. DiMaggio will send out an update this week and explained that they want to be very careful about live learning and be sure they have looked at all potential risks and benefits. Dr. Serino explained that she updates parents on Wednesdays, Mrs. DiMaggio updates on Thursday and the principals update on Fridays. Mrs. Geraci asked if they could know the reasons why they would and wouldn't do it. Dr. Serino agreed and stated that she knows people are frustrated. She knows some districts are doing live learning and stated that safety is a primary concern including teachers seeing things in students' homes that could warrant a DCF referral. Dr. Serino also explained that they have Go Guardian monitor students' access to inappropriate content and work to limit access to inappropriate content. She also explained that they need teachers to get comfortable with what they are doing now before they open it up to a whole new dimension.

Mr. Moore did notice that his grandchildren are happy for the weekend once again after being back on a regular schedule. Dr. Serino reported that she sent a blank slide show out to employees and close to 60 people have submitted a slide of where they are working now. She has gained quite the insight into the challenges of working from home.

Mr. Yamartino thanked Mrs. Neubig, Dr. Serino and the administrators for all of their hard work. He realizes what a challenging time this is and appreciates all they do. Dr. Friedrich echoed that sentiment. Mrs. Booth agreed and also wanted to say that her kids really enjoyed the morning announcements from the principals this morning.

Mr. Yamartino had sent out some information on a spreadsheet and Mr. Moore felt that they could put a letter in the Town Times to explain it and a letter to every resident as well, explaining that the board will vote on the budget and there will be no referendum as well as including the total budget. There could then be either a questionnaire or an online form for the public. Mr. Yamartino offered to help in any way.

### Communications

Mr. Moore received an email from Carl Stoup that stated he felt that, because of distance learning, there may be options for the future that could be used for small classrooms. He just received two emails from Nick Faiella and he will add them to the minutes. Mr. Moore did receive another letter from Donia Viola with a concern that he had not read her email into the record and he explained that it will be included in the minutes. He asked the board if they preferred the emails be read out loud or just include them with the minutes. Dr. Friedrich was happy to have them included with the minutes. Mr. Moore will continue to summarize emails and enter the full emails into the minutes and Mr. Hicks felt that was a great idea.

Mr. Moore has also received communication from Ningbo, China and they were concerned about things here in Connecticut. They also offered to send masks.

### Adjournment

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

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

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First

### Public Comment Received Via Email

**From:** Carleton Stoup SR  
**Date:** April 6, 2020 at 4:54:27 PM EDT  
**To:** [rmoore@rsd13.org](mailto:rmoore@rsd13.org)  
**Subject:** April 6, 2020 BOE Meeting Comments  
**Reply-To:** Carleton Stoup SR

Good evening to All,

A great big thank you to everyone for getting everything up on line.  
I'm sure it was a huge task.

One of the thoughts I have is that these current circumstance may generate some good practices.  
Such as on line courses for the classes with a small number of students in attendance.  
Maybe consolidated with other schools that have the same issue with small class size.  
Once the dust settles I would like to see this thought given some serious consideration.

Regards,

Carl Stoup  
Durham

**From:** Faiella, Nicholas T  
**Sent:** Monday, April 06, 2020 7:38 PM  
**To:** 'Robert Moore' <[rmoore@rsd13.org](mailto:rmoore@rsd13.org)>  
**Subject:** Public Comment

Bob,  
Given the potential for the short term nature of the play scape at Middletown. Did we look into leasing options for the play scape needs at Lyman?

Nick Faiella

**From:** Faiella, Nicholas T  
**Sent:** Monday, April 06, 2020 7:39 PM  
**To:** Faiella, Nicholas T  
**Subject:** RE: Public Comment

Sorry "at John Lyman"

**From:** "Faiella, Nicholas T"  
**Date:** April 6, 2020 at 7:53:32 PM EDT  
**To:** Robert Moore <[rmoore@rsd13.org](mailto:rmoore@rsd13.org)>  
**Subject:** RE: Public Comment

Also, "who" owns the play scapes in between the softball fields? Can any of that equipment be used now that Korn school is closed?

**From:** Richard C Parmelee Jr  
**Date:** April 8, 2020 at 3:32:15 PM EDT  
**To:** Robert Moore <[rmoore@rsd13.org](mailto:rmoore@rsd13.org)>  
**Subject:** Football  
**Reply-To:** "Richard C Parmelee Jr"

Time to end this sport- Injuries are accumulative- Not enough students in Middlefield and Durham to sustain this program- Never saw an explanation regarding other Schools in the District 13 program and

the assessment that we levy on them - All positions should go to Middlefield and Durham students before outsiders get considerations- The NFL players brought legal action against the NFL for injuries and received millions in the settlement- Joe Namath said the human body was not made for football- The full extent of permanent injuries are not known because autopsies are not performed on all players-

Regards

Rick

Richard C Parmelee Jr