

**Revised**

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in special session on Wednesday, December 16, 2020 at 7:00 PM remotely.

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

Board members absent: Dr. Taylor and Mrs. Geraci

Administration present: Dr. Serino, Superintendent of Schools

Guests present: A number of Regional School District 13 administration, employees and invited guests were present

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

**Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**National Anthem - Ava and Emily Dell'Orfano**

**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, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

**CRHS Reporters - Jaden Astle, Cadence Hurlbert and Noelle Sorensen**

Noelle Sorensen expressed gratitude, on behalf of the entire study body, for the innumerable things that Dr. Serino has done for them and the entire district. One of the greatest impacts on Noelle's life has been the Chinese exchange program which gave her the chance to get to know amazing people from the other side of the world and to expand her perspective.

Cadence Hurlbert explained that she can always turn to music and she thanked Dr. Serino for her continuous support of the music department that has allowed that to continue.

Jaden Astle expressed his gratitude on behalf of all athletes for Dr. Serino's support of the athletic programs this year.

**Recognition of Dr. Serino by board and invited guests**

Mr. Hicks read the following proclamation: "Be it known to all that, on this date, Kathryn Y. Serino, distinguished and beloved superintendent of schools since January, 2014, was duly recognized and acknowledged for her dedication to the children and citizens of Regional School District 13 community. And whereas, Kathryn Serino, having served with honor and distinction, hereby concludes this challenge

for the responsibility of educating our youth. Be it known that by these words, her deeds in a positive manner will long be remembered and cherished by this Board of Education, the towns of Durham and Middlefield and, indeed, our children. And whereas, Kathryn Serino served this district as its fourth superintendent, her persistent attention to detail, promoting and continually reinforcing the inherent value of each individual in the district, her focus on the well-being of all and her willingness to work tirelessly on behalf of the district have made Regional School District 13 a better place. Her unwavering commitment and her vision of operational success for this community will long be remembered as a guide for those that follow in future public service. And whereas Kathryn Serino demonstrated her tireless work ethic on many initiatives for the district, including Portrait of the Citizen, strategic coherence planning, ACES China partnership, outdoor graduation, STEAM initiative, Korn School closing and educational rounds utilizing her extensive background that provided insightful direction and has positively impacted the work of the board in moving the district forward. And whereas Kathryn Serino demonstrated unwavering leadership on all subcommittees for this board, notably Student Achievement, Educational Resources, Policy, Facilities Utilization, Finance, Well-Being and Human Resources, having actively participated in over 500 meetings during her seven-year tenure. Her vast knowledge and voice of reason provided insightful direction and proudly moved the district and the community to new heights. And whereas Kathryn Serino made a difference in leading the district during a worldwide pandemic to continue the process of providing our youth with high-quality educational opportunities under the most demanding circumstances and demonstrated determination and common sense that provided this district with balance and a clear point of view for the successful continuation of education for all. Therefore, be it resolved, that we, the members of Regional District 13 Board of Education, on this 16<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2020, proudly salute Kathryn Serino and encourage others to do the same and join us in recognizing Kathryn Serino, a woman who made an extraordinary difference in the success of this school district and the advancement of its mission. All this is with our sincere gratitude for your unselfish service. By your actions, you have distinguished yourself and brought great pride upon this community, our schools and its children. Signed, Robert E. Moore, Chairman, Norman W. Hicks, Secretary, Christine Geraci, Treasurer.” At this time, it is an honor to place this document as a motion for approval by the Board of Education and have this document attached to the minutes of this meeting.

*Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to place the proclamation document for approval by the Board of Education and to have this document attached to the minutes of this meeting.*

*In favor of placing the proclamation document for approval by the Board of Education and having this document attached to the minutes of this meeting: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

Ed Bailey, First Selectman of Middlefield, read the following resolution from the Board of Selectmen, which will be voted on next Tuesday: “Resolution of the Board of Selectmen. Be it known that the citizens of Middlefield and Rockfall hereby recognize and applaud Kathryn Serino for her service to Regional School District 13 as superintendent and, whereas, Kathryn Serino is recognized for her untiring dedication providing leadership to provide the best possible education for the youth of our town. And whereas Kathryn Serino has fostered a great relationship between Regional School District 13, our town government and its citizens and whereas Kathryn Serino’s leadership, passion and dedication is an outstanding example of citizenship to our community, our state and our country. And so, now therefore, the Middlefield Board of Selectmen, recognizing these contributions of Kathryn Serino, approve this

resolution on December 22, 2020 and is recorded in the official records of the Town of Middlefield.” Mr. Bailey added that he will present Dr. Serino with a framed, signed resolution.

Kerrie Flanagan, previous Chairman of the Board of Education, noted that she feels honored to have had the opportunity to know Dr. Serino and learned a lot from her as a leader. She is so thankful for everything Dr. Serino accomplished in the district and so proud of the school district. She thanked Dr. Serino for her support and her contributions.

Merrill Adams, a previous member of the Board of Education, noted that she is so happy they hired CES to do the executive search for the superintendent who encouraged the board to take a look at Dr. Serino. One of the wonderful things Dr. Serino has done is to listen to everyone. She always remembers who everyone is. During the interview process, Dr. Serino was modest, knowledgeable and many other things that the district wanted and they all felt that they couldn't let her get away. Mrs. Adams is so proud of what the district has done and continues to do and acknowledged that Dr. Serino set that stage.

Jim Irish, chairman of the Middlefield Board of Finance, thanked Dr. Serino for her leadership over the last seven years. He was struck by Dr. Serino's genuine demeanor and listening skills which have enabled her successful engagement with staff, Board of Ed colleagues and community members. Both Mr. Irish and the Board of Finance are grateful for Dr. Serino's move toward greater dialog and interaction with the communities which gave them confidence to trust that her objective of maximizing the capabilities and character of the students would be balanced by the economic realities of the communities. The strategic coherence plans, Portrait of the Citizen work, the partnership with China, focus on well-being, push on raising staff capabilities are all examples of excellence. He shared a story of a difficult board meeting where Middlefield residents were challenging the closure of Lyman School and the move toward a unified academic program. Public comment lasted over an hour and Mr. Irish, Mr. Stoup and Mr. Stengel watched Dr. Serino maintain her ever-present grace but could tell that she was frustrated. He told her that her work was solid and she replied that she needed more support than just three old white guys. On behalf of the entire Board of Finance, Mr. Irish wished Dr. Serino the best.

Bob Yamartino stated that Dr. Serino is a very talented and gifted educator as well as a leader. She passes along the knowledge and skills that allow those around her to grow and develop their own talents, explore their own passions and fulfill their life's ambitions. Mr. Yamartino felt that Dr. Serino has done that at every level in the community. She planted the vision of a single educational path, moved the district to individualized student assessments and goal setting, implemented professional development and coaching, formulated and facilitated the Portrait of a Citizen, fostered a sense of community with diversity and inclusion and social and emotional well-being. Dr. Serino has embraced community outreach and helped the board understand her positions while listening to their opinions and to ultimately draw a consensus conclusion. Mr. Yamartino thinks about the thousands of lives that Dr. Serino has touched and thanked her for everything she has shared and taught all of them. He wished Dr. Serino much health and happiness.

Scott Sadinsky reviewed that he met Dr. Serino seven years ago and made an immediate connection. He felt that Dr. Serino reads people well and gets to know them all. As far as Strong School as well as every other building, the commitment Dr. Serino has made, the visits, the walk-about, spending time in classrooms have all been remarkable. The A-team (Dr. Serino's nickname for the administrative team) appreciates all of her guidance, her honesty and her patience. They could not have asked for a better

example of leadership through the unprecedented times since March. Somehow, through all of this, Dr. Serino has maintained her humor and that has been an absolute blessing to everyone. Mr. Sadinsky stated that they are better people, better leaders and better administrators as a result of their time with Dr. Serino. He thanked her for her friendship and the privilege and honor of spending the last 7+ years together.

Nancy Earls thinks of Dr. Serino when she hears “You Can Do This Hard Thing,” a song by Carrie Newcomer, because she walked into District 13 at a time when a school was being closed, two programs were being made into one and then the pandemic. Mrs. Earls always felt held up, honored and cared for by Dr. Serino and has now realized that everybody feels that way. Her endless energy and deep, deep, deep caring about everybody in District 13 is beyond what can be described.

Attorney Peter Maher, from Shipman and Goodwin, congratulated Dr. Serino on her well-deserved retirement. He stated that it has been an absolute honor to work with her and he is personally grateful that their careers overlapped. He understands that most people aren’t happy when they have to call a lawyer, but he always enjoyed being able to talk to Dr. Serino. Dr. Serino always felt that doing the right thing for the families was doing the right thing for the district. She always promoted the well-being of everyone who worked for her and attended the district’s schools. Attorney Maher also felt that Dr. Serino had the respect of all the stakeholders. On behalf of Shipman and Goodwin and all of his colleagues, Attorney Maher thanked Dr. Serino and offered his congratulations.

Nancy Boyle, former member of the Board of Education, echoed everything that has been said. Dr. Serino has left an indelible mark on everyone. Mrs. Boyle mentioned the love that everyone feels for Dr. Serino and the love that she has given to the entire district. Dr. Serino has helped to create a welcoming environment in the district and that gift will keep giving for years to come. Mrs. Boyle stated that Dr. Serino has made everyone feel like they are her family, with her love and sincerity, and everyone is eternally grateful.

Lucy Petrella agreed with what everyone else has stated and remembered the day she first met Dr. Serino and knowing that she was just the right fit for the district. Mrs. Petrella is happy that Dr. Serino will finally have more time for her family and actually have some free time at last. There is a whole world of possibilities waiting for Dr. Serino and she hopes that she enjoys each adventure. While Dr. Serino will be sorely missed, the legacy of her vision for the district will continue for many years.

Victor Friedrich recalled a day when Dr. Serino was doing a day-long tour of the schools prior to being hired and the room was full of students. He was astonished that Dr. Serino called every student by name and before she left the room, she made sure to call on the students who hadn’t volunteered anything. Dr. Friedrich felt that Dr. Serino has been calling on people, by name, for the last seven years and asking for their input. He felt that is an extraordinary degree of caring as well. Dr. Friedrich also felt that Dr. Serino’s vision and the incredible transformation of the district, with all of the teams she has created, were an extraordinary accomplishment. Dr. Friedrich commented that he had never seen leadership like that before and added that he didn’t feel there was a day when Dr. Serino didn’t give 120 percent of herself. He ended by saying Dr. Serino has been an inspiration and has made all of their lives better.

Jeremy Renninghoff, former Board of Education member, recalled having lunch with Dr. Serino last year and she remembered something from her interview six years prior. Dr. Serino walked into a rough

situation and she helped bring it all back together. Closing Korn School, the eventual closure of Lyman, the unprecedented \$800,000+ budget decrease and improvements in student outcomes and achievements would have been very difficult to accomplish under previous circumstances. Mr. Renninghoff felt that the board could not have done it without Dr. Serino's expertise. She helped them all to learn that change is not necessarily bad. Mr. Renninghoff thanked her for everything she has done for the district, for all the board members and for him.

Jamie Roraback stated that he will most remember Dr. Serino's depth of sincerity. Everyone she speaks to is the most important person in the room at that moment. Tony Dyer used to say that he didn't want to see any graduate of District 13 squirting mustard on hamburgers, meaning he had high standards. Mr. Roraback commends Dr. Serino for having high standards and giving 200 percent of herself. He felt that her heart was always with the students. He thanked Dr. Serino for everything and brought his daughter, Claire, in to say thank you as well.

Missy Booth first met Dr. Serino when she went to complain at her first Board of Education meeting. Since that time, Dr. Serino has been very accepting of all of her feedback and has always been easy to talk to. Mrs. Booth appreciates everything that Dr. Serino has done for the children and hopes that she enjoys her time with her family. Mrs. Booth also mentioned Dr. Serino's decision to call a snow day for tomorrow and felt that it is exactly what the staff and the kids need.

Maura Caramanello recalled when she was a teacher and they rolled out the paper red carpet at Brewster School for Dr. Serino and she walked down it like she was walking down a real red carpet. She knew from that day that Dr. Serino was going to have fun and have a great sense of humor. Since that time, Mrs. Caramanello has known Dr. Serino in a different capacity, both as a Board of Ed member and a friend, and the latter is the most important to her. Dr. Serino has given personal advice that has been very important to Mrs. Caramanello. Mrs. Caramanello read an Irish poem and hoped that Dr. Serino would bring Stella play on a playground with her and Sophia one day.

Mr. Moore then announced that the board selected a present for Dr. Serino and asked her to open it. Dr. Serino thanked everyone for the gorgeous Regional District 13 wooden tray made by Nick Planeta, a student.

### **Public Comment Regarding Dr. Serino**

Claudia Rovelli explained that she met Dr. Serino four or five years ago at a Scholarship Committee fund raiser and explained that Dr. Serino was always willing to give her time. She explained that she and her son, Gage, offer free math tutoring for district students in the summer and Dr. Serino offered to let them make their copies in the district's offices. Mrs. Rovelli recognized Dr. Serino's gift of reading people and her sincerity.

Mary Johnson appreciated the ability to sit in on the gathering and felt that Dr. Serino should be very proud as they are all proud of her. On behalf of the support staff, Mrs. Johnson thanked Dr. Serino for all of her support for their group. She felt that Dr. Serino has always been open and approachable and they appreciated that.

Anne Juncadella thanked Dr. Serino for being so supportive of the school nurses in these unprecedented times, both professionally and of the nurses individually.

Dr. Serino explained that she could never have done her work without a supportive, loving family and hers has waited for her. She has received so much support from her parents, her siblings, her two daughters and her husband. Looking back to arriving for her interview in 2013, she knew then that this was where she belonged. Dr. Serino has not had a day when she hasn't thought of how much she loves this place, but mostly she thinks of how much she loves the people. She added how rewarding her work has been and noted that one of the characteristics of well-being is to be a part of something bigger than yourself and she experienced that in the district. Dr. Serino feels that she has been part of something that has changed the world and will continue to do so. She explained that she doesn't want to leave, but she does want to go.

Dr. Serino also commented on the focus group with high school students that was part of her interview. The kids were saying they wanted leadership that cared about them and would stay. They wanted leadership that knew them, cared about them and believed them. Dr. Serino feels that everyone at the meeting does just that for the kids and have always had her back as well. Dr. Serino added that it has been the greatest honor of her professional life to serve with everyone on behalf of the children of the district.

Mr. Moore admitted that he has never known someone like Dr. Serino who is so committed to the children of the district and making life better for everyone. He speaks with her every day and will miss her dearly. Mr. Moore noted that being on the board has changed his life, probably more than anything else.

Donia Viola stated that her relationship with Dr. Serino was a welcome relief and she felt that Dr. Serino was very much more intuitive as to how the residents feel. She always took the time to listen, think things through and was willing to compromise.

## **New Business**

### **A. Possible vote on pension investment managers**

Mr. Yamartino explained that the retirement fund portfolio has been performing in the top third nationwide. It is now funded at 91 percent of the actuarial estimated needs, with a total of \$9.6 million. The ERC met earlier tonight and discussed recommendations from advisors from Morgan Stanley.

*Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hicks, to authorize our fund managers to switch from Scharf Equity to Boston Partners Large Cap Value SMA.*

Growth has outperformed value by approximately 75 percent over the past five years and they feel that due to COVID-19, the recovery could take longer than expected and growth could be challenging. Therefore, they'd like to change the manager to one that still focuses on high-quality companies that have lower growth profiles and less cyclical businesses. Boston Partners would additionally be expected to pay a higher level of divided income than AMI although this is not their stated investment mandate. Value Managers also have a history of protecting better to the down side during more challenging

markets. We reviewed this at the ERC and the ERC team agreed with this consensus. We want to switch from Congress Asset Management Mid Cap Growth to Nuance Mid Cap Value. It is the same rationale as above that we're going to switch from a growth fund to a value fund. Then, they want to switch out of the Boyd Waterson Intermediate Term Fixed Income and Western Asset Intermediate Maturity Fixed Income to Parametric Eaton Vance Short-Term Corporate Bond Ladder and Ryan LML Custom Liability Portfolio. Their analysis is that they're concerned with the volatility of interest rates as well and since Treasury and many corporate bonds are paying negative real interest rates, we want to do our best to insulate against both interest rate and credit risk in the fixed income markets. Being a short-term corporate bond ladder will achieve both these goals, but investing in investment-grade corporate bonds with one- to three-year maturities and holding the bonds until maturity. When one bond matures, the proceeds are then reinvested in a three-year bond. This also lets us take advantage of rising interest rates which is a risk, even though the Fed has stated that interest rates should remain low until at least 2022. What they're really saying here is when you invest in a bond, as interest rates rise, the value of the bonds go down and that's a risk to our value if we were required to cash out of those bonds at a given time in order to pay the liabilities. So, by structuring it with laddered bonds, bonds will become mature and we can cash them out at full value so there's no risk to the principle but we will have earned the interest that was due on them. They will also mature at a rate that will more than satisfy the obligation of the fund to pay the benefits to the retirees. So, basically this is the cash that's going to be paying the people that are retired and every time those bonds come due, they'll just be rolled into the next ones if there's excess. This is a five-year ladder, so as the first year matures, it will pay the first-year obligations and anything extra will get rolled into the next one.

Mr. Yamartino added that the bond ladder investment will be roughly 25 percent of the portfolio and 75 percent will be in equities and stocks that carry a higher risk, but a higher opportunity for reward. Mr. Yamartino felt that that is essentially putting \$2.6 million on the sideline. Over the next five years, roughly \$2 million will be needed to cover the obligations of the pensions. The ERC discussed possibly reducing the \$2.6 million down closer to \$2 million so that the fund is at 80/20 rather than 75/25. While it would then mean slightly higher risk, it would also give the potential for closing the gap by about \$200,000 to \$300,000. Mr. Yamartino will have a discussion with Mrs. Geraci about this and they also need to be sure the investment statement allows an 80/20.

*In favor of authorizing the fund managers to switch managers, as discussed above: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

**B. Appointment of interim superintendent for period of January 1, 2021 to January 3, 2021**

Mr. Moore explained that Dr. Serino will be leaving on December 31, 2020 and Mrs. DiMaggio has agreed to serve as interim superintendent from January 1, 2021 to January 3, 2021.

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, that Regional School District 13 Board of Education appoints Cori-Ann DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, as interim superintendent of Regional School District 13 for the period beginning January 1, 2021 to January 3, 2021.*

*In favor of appointing Cori-Ann DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, as interim superintendent of Regional School District 13 for the period beginning January 1, 2021 to January 3, 2021: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

**C. Possible vote to accept Merwin grant**

Mr. Moore explained that the actual paperwork has not been completed, but they have offered \$5,500 to support the virtual academy that Mrs. DiMaggio has been working on.

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to accept the Merwin grant.*

*In favor of accepting the Merwin grant: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

**Public Comment**

Donia Viola has still not gotten any response about the new superintendent's salary level and asked for an answer. She also noted the distractions on the Zoom calls and hoped that someone could control the meeting better. Mrs. Viola also felt that the board should consider talking with the legislative representatives because the State of Connecticut has been known to reach into teachers' pension funds for other purposes. Dr. Serino explained that she just met with Mr. Moore today to discuss Dr. Schuch's compensation. Mr. Moore also explained that the pension fund that they discussed was for non-teachers.

**Adjournment**

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

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

Meeting was adjourned at 8:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First



Regional District 13 Board of Education  
Durham and Middlefield, Connecticut



Be it known to all that on this date Kathryn Y. Serino, distinguished and beloved Superintendent of Schools since January 2014, is duly recognized and acknowledged for her dedication to the children and citizens of the Regional School District 13 community; and

Whereas, Kathryn Serino, having served with honor and distinction, hereby concludes this challenge for the responsibility of educating our youth. Be it known that by these words her deeds and her positive manner will be long remembered and cherished by this Board of Education, the Towns of Durham and Middlefield and, indeed, our children; and

Whereas, Kathryn Serino served this District as its fourth Superintendent. Her persistent attention to detail, promoting and continually reinforcing the inherent value of each individual in the District, her focus on the well-being of all and her willingness to work tirelessly on behalf of the District have made Regional School District 13 a better place. Her unwavering commitment and her vision of operational success for this community will long be remembered as a guide for those that follow in future public service; and

Whereas, Kathryn Serino demonstrated her tireless work ethic on many initiatives for the District including Portrait of a Citizen, Strategic Coherence Planning, ACES China Partnership, Outdoor Graduation, STEAM Initiative, Korn School Closing and Educational Rounds utilizing her extensive background that provided insightful direction and has positively impacted the work of the Board in moving the District forward; and,

Whereas, Kathryn Serino demonstrated unwavering leadership on all subcommittees for this Board most notably Student Achievement, Educational Resources, Policy, Facilities Utilization, Finance, Well-Being and Human Resources having actively participated in over 500 meetings during her seven-year tenure. Her vast knowledge and voice of reason provided insightful direction and have proudly moved the District and community to new heights; and

Whereas, Kathryn Serino made a difference in leading the District during a worldwide pandemic to continue the process of providing our youth with high-quality educational opportunities under the most demanding circumstances and demonstrated determination and common sense that provided this District with balance and a clear point of view for the successful continuation of education for all.

Therefore, be it resolved that we, the members of the Regional School District 13 Board of Education on this sixteenth day of December, two thousand twenty proudly salute Kathryn Serino and encourage others to do the same and join us in recognizing Kathryn Serino, a woman who made an extraordinary difference in the success of this School District and the advancement of its mission. All this is with our sincere gratitude for your unselfish service. By your actions, you have distinguished yourself and brought great pride upon this community, our schools and its children.

Robert E. Moore, Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Norman W. Hicks, Secretary \_\_\_\_\_

Christine Geraci, Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_