

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education held a public hearing on Wednesday, April 7, 2021 at 8:00 PM remotely.

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

Board members absent: Ms. Geraci

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance, Mrs. DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Mrs. Keane, Director of Student Services and Special Education, Mr. Brough, Interim Human Resource Specialist and Mr. Pietrasko, Director of Infrastructure and Security Technology

Mr. Moore opened the public hearing at 8:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. Moore read the Warning of Public Hearing and Mr. Hicks read the Return of the Call into the record.

Mr. Moore explained that the gross budget for next year is \$37,022,976, which represents a .93 percent reduction from last year. The total gross budget is what is actually voted on at referendum. The net budget is \$35,470,647, which represents a 2.51 percent increase over last year. This net budget is what the towns' taxes are based on.

The towns' assessments are determined by the school population, with Durham at 66.74 percent and Middlefield at 33.26 percent. The allocation for Durham is \$23,673,110 and \$11,797,537 for Middlefield. Grants are then subtracted from those totals, leaving \$20,507,377 for Durham and \$9,960,033 for Middlefield. These totals are an increase over last year of \$745,687 and \$122,752, respectively.

Mr. Moore then reviewed the per pupil expenditure over the last several years. In 2019-2020, the per pupil cost was \$22,012 and the expected cost for this year is \$22,712. They are estimating the per pupil cost for next year to be \$23,960. These costs are driven primarily by student enrollment. Mr. Moore then explained that the district lost 112 students in 2019-2020, 47 students last year and they are estimating to lose 77 students this year.

Mr. Moore reviewed that the total budget has stayed relatively flat for the last six or seven years.

The main budget drivers this year are the fact that they used a large amount of the fund balance last year to provide a zero budget. That left the district with only \$384,000 to apply to next year's budget. Mrs. Neubig and Dr. Schuch have worked very hard to save money throughout the year and have applied an additional \$400,000 in savings to this budget.

Salaries have gone up by 2.3 percent over last year. Health insurance has gone up about 14 percent. Benefits have gone up just over 1.5 percent over last year. Capital needs have also gone up and will be funded at the full 1 percent capacity that is allowed by the state (\$360,000).

The biggest decrease in this budget is debt service due to the fact that they have not issued the bonds that had been approved yet. They are also proposing a 3.0 FTE reduction in staffing and a lot of purchased services have decreased as well. The board has kept within the established class size guidelines and are proposing a reduction of 2 FTEs at John Lyman and 1 FTE at Strong.

Mr. Moore explained that the Benchwarmers have asked the board to consider replacing the scoreboards at the baseball and softball fields, so they took some money out of the turf replacement account as well as other sources. The Benchwarmers have graciously proposed to donate \$15,000 towards the scoreboards at the gym in the high school. A sprinkler system pump house has become necessary with the water coming in from Middletown and at the end of its useful life. They have included \$40,000 for classroom furniture replacement and \$30,000 for unanticipated repairs and maintenance.

Mr. Moore then reviewed the debt service and again explained that they have yet to issue some of the bonds. The energy project has decreased some of the need for those repairs. Debt service will go up again next year as bonds are issued this year but drops off again after that.

Looking at the budget history over the last several years, it has really stayed flat. The gross budget in 2015-2016 was \$37,517,000 and this year is \$37,022,000. The net budget was \$35,640,000 in 2015-2016 and is \$35,470,000 this year. Mr. Moore reiterated that the board, administration and staff have tried very hard to maintain a flat budget for the last eight years.

Mr. Pietrasko explained that phone numbers and meeting code are on the website and in the description of YouTube. There were no callers on the line, but there were 38 people watching the YouTube stream. Mr. Moore thanked everyone for their patience in the budget process.

Dr. Friedrich explained that this budget process began in October or November and has been thoroughly discussed over many months. Every bit of the budget is balanced against the educational needs of the children.

Adjournment

Mr. Moore declared that the public hearing was closed and all business was completed.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

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Alwaz First