

DRAFT – Subject to change
Board of Education

Regional District 13

March 14, 2007

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, March 14, 2007 at 7:30 p.m. in the library at Strong Middle School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currilin, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Hennick, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Raczka, Dr. Shoemaker. Member absent: Mrs. Flanagan. Also present: Mr. Melnik, Mrs. Viccaro.

Mr. Raczka called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

Public Comment: Ernie Judson, representing D13 Parents for Good Schools, said he attended the meeting held last week where the selectmen of both towns had a preview of the budget. He was surprised at the Board meeting that the selectman took such a strong stand against the budget. He commended Mrs. Viccaro for the work she has put into this budget. He considers this year a make-up year.

Maria Richardson of Durham is happy with the budget presented. She feels it addressed the needs at the high school. She would also like to see AP classes increased as well. She questioned if there is really a need for the portable classrooms. Ms. Richardson would also like to see money for a talented and gifted program included in the budget.

Mr. Judson said there was a strong consensus among those he has spoken with in support of the high school additions, the music increases and the technology initiatives.

Josh Stockdale questioned the format of the meetings, whether the public would be able to ask questions later in the meeting. Mr. Raczka said that after the Board finished talking about the budget he would open the floor again for public comment.

Mr. Stockdale supports the addition of increased technology at Memorial School. His child is a student there and receives keyboarding in 5th grade only. He questioned whether the portable used as storage at Coginchaug could be moved to another school. Mrs. Viccaro explained that all but one section of the high school portables is currently being used, only one has storage in it. The high school portables can not be moved again, as they have been relocated twice already.

Next board Meeting: The next Board meeting will be held at Strong School on March 21, 2007.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Adams the agenda was unanimously approved.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Golschneider the minutes of the March 7, 2007 Board of Education Meeting were unanimously approved.

Communications: None.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro has been meeting this past week with the parent groups to discuss the budget. Information will also be put on the website. If changes in the budget occur they will get posted. She also hopes to have a question and answer section that people will be able to access. Eventually the whole budget will get put on the site, but not this year.

Bloodborne pathogens training took place this week.

Mrs. Viccaro attended a workshop on teacher and administrator evaluations this week. She will be presenting it to administrators at an upcoming administrative council meeting.

Valerie Leeds and Richard McCarthy, Strong School teachers have asked if a fast track summer camp for science can take place at Strong School this summer. It is a national program with one or two week sessions in July. Mrs. Viccaro is getting more information, but she is in support of the program. Dr. Shoemaker questioned whether the District would be responsible for providing scholarships for needy students if the camp comes under the auspices of the District.

Mrs. Viccaro discussed the fight that happened at the boys' basketball game with Derby. She said the incident happened with two minutes left in the game, was unprovoked by our players and was handled very quickly. Officer Topolus of Middlefield was right in front of the incident. At the end of the game all the Coginchaug students stayed in the stands until the Derby fans and players left the grounds. Our students listened very well and Mrs. Viccaro was proud of how they handled the situation. She has spoken with the administration from Derby and is confident that they are taking the necessary disciplinary action.

Mrs. Viccaro told the Board that the Connecticut Education Network grant money from last year was released and the District is in the process of connecting fiber optic wiring to Brewster and Lyman schools. Before the end of the school year these schools will be seeing a great increase in their connection speeds. The District is in the process of applying for additional grant money to connect the existing and proposed portables throughout the District to the CEN.

Vote on Science Curriculum: Mr. Raczka asked about the depth of earth science in the curriculum. Mrs. Luckenbach said the State has made it an elective course. The bioethics strands to the curriculum were added by the District. If meteorology, geology and astronomy are added students have the option to get more earth science.

On a motion by Dr. Ochterski, second Mrs. Adams the Board of Education unanimously approved the Science Curriculum as presented.

2007-08 Budget: Mr. Raczka began the meeting by inviting the public to call him if they have any questions that do not get answered. He reminded people that the District lost \$147,000 in ECS money last year. Mr. Melnik has been advised to keep the State receipts the same as last year as it may be some time before the legislature makes a final decision on the State budget proposals.

Mr. Melnik presented a revenue analysis handout to the Board. With the information that he has right now the net budget increase will be 7.7%. He has not received information from the towns as to the grand list and the mill rate impact.

Dr. Shoemaker questioned if any of the fund balance is being carried over into next year's budget. Mr. Melnik said \$600,000 from the fund balance is in the budget.

Dr. Shoemaker asked if there is any change in the ratio of students between Durham and Middlefield. Mr. Melnik said that it will remain the same but Dr. Shoemaker asked if this information could be verified because it has always changed slightly.

The addition of courses at the high school was discussed at length. Mrs. Viccaro explained that even though 12 new courses have been proposed, it does not mean they will all automatically be offered. Course selection is currently happening at the high school. She said the space exists for the classes because they may be taking the place of another class or a study hall. In some cases additional sections of courses are being added to decrease class size. Board members were concerned that there are no textbooks in this budget to support the new electives. Classes such as the science electives would definitely need new textbooks and possibly lab equipment. Mrs. Viccaro said that money budgeted to support the classes that the new electives are replacing can be moved if needed but Board members were concerned that this will not be enough to purchase textbooks and supplies for a new course.

Mrs. Adams asked if the curriculum has been written for any of the proposed courses. Mrs. Luckenbach said they have not. Mrs. Adams feels the process is out of sync. She would like to see more planning before the Board is asked to approve a new course. Mrs. Viccaro explained that it is difficult to ask teachers to go through the entire process of planning out a course, not knowing if it will be offered. She suggested that more complete outlines of classes be done next year as a better process to see if the classes are worthy.

The teacher for the new technology classes is currently a special education teacher. She teaches an average and is 1.2 because of the technology class she also teaches. If the new technology classes are approved, a new full-time special education teacher will need to be hired.

Mr. Hennick questioned what will happen to the 30 additional students at the high school if the additional electives are not added. Mrs. Viccaro said that more sections of the existing classes would be added and classes would remain large.

Dr. Shoemaker questioned if a library assistant is needed at the middle school if they agree to fund the library automation system. Mrs. Viccaro said by having a full-time assistant at Strong it will allow the media specialist the opportunity to go into the classrooms more to work with students.

Dr. Shoemaker questioned the need for the portable classrooms at Brewster School. He said that Brewster School's enrollment is down by thirteen students next year and he questioned if the number of classes was going to change. It was estimated that the portables (two duplexes) will cost \$70,000 per year for a three-year lease, including the set-up costs. Mrs. Heckler explained that currently at Brewster the reading room for the TLC and Reading Recovery program may have six staff working with individuals or small groups of students at a time. The special education classroom has two teachers and five or six assistants working with students. The conference room has been divided into three teaching sections for ABA and speech. There is currently no conference room in the school and her office is used for conferences. If the portables are placed at Brewster they would be used for second grade classrooms. She feels it is important to keep the reading program and the special education classes in the main section of the school.

The portables at Memorial School would be used as a new computer lab. The computers will be purchased through a lease purchase program. Memorial School is the school in the worse shape in terms of technology in the District. They also need additional space for special education at Memorial. Currently at Memorial laptop computers have been used between classrooms but it has been impossible to keep them all charged and running. The amount of use they receive is heavy and the amount of instructional time lost to set up is great.

Mr. Hicks said the magnet school is very successful with their laptops and they have 900 running at a time. He suggested investigating their program before deciding to do away with laptops entirely. Mrs. Viccaro said the magnet school has a full-time staff member dedicated to keeping the laptop program running. The District does not have the resources to do this. There is \$31,000 in the budget for the new 26 station Mac lab at Memorial.

Dr. Shoemaker questioned why the postage budget has not decreased even though 35% of the parents are now being contacted by email. Mrs. Emory explained some of the special education items that she is mandated to send by mail. The principals said that much of their postage is spent on summer mailings and for items such as the mastery testing scores, now that many more grades are being tested. There is also a postal rate increase anticipated this year.

Dr. Shoemaker asked if the Board could be presented with the fixed cost increases for next week. He wants to know the percentage of this budget that is flexible and how much there is no control over.

Ms. Parsons asked Mrs. Viccaro to prepare a class distribution list for next week, showing all the sections, class sizes by grade.

Mr. Raczka asked Mrs. Heckler to explain what a whisper phone is as it is in Brewster's budget. Mrs. Heckler said that it is a headset that students wear when they are reading. They whisper while they are reading and it allows them to monitor their own reading. He also questioned the cost of replacement uniforms for Strong School at a cost of \$25 each. He felt that this cost was very low and wanted more information. Mrs. Viccaro will ask Mr. Nicol what the uniforms are for.

Mr. Raczka is concerned about the costs of copiers and wondered if a consultant has ever been brought in to look at the copier needs Districtwide. Mr. Melnik was asked to look into this further.

Dr. Shoemaker asked Mrs. Viccaro to present her priority list at next week's meeting.

Mrs. Golschneider asked Mrs. Viccaro to make a list of needs vs. wants from the new budget items.

Mr. Raczka talked about what is not in this budget that should be. Items such as the new track and tennis courts, all day kindergarten and many capital needs were mentioned.

Mrs. Adams questioned the District's liability concerning the use of the track. Mrs. Viccaro said there is only one meet scheduled at the track for this year. It may be decided that the track needs to be shut down.

Public Comment: Rick Hanley is in support of the computer lab for Memorial. He does not feel that it is efficient to use laptops. All the rooms would have to be wired for wireless internet.

Mr. Stockdale asked if the fixed costs could be further broken out for next week to show what percentage goes to special education, salaries, etc.

Karen Buckley Bates spoke on behalf of BKPTA in support of the new math textbooks for Brewster and Korn. Personally, the computer and technology needs, the additional courses at the high school, and the space needs at Brewster are a priority for her.

Policy Committee: Mr. Hicks said the committee met this evening. For the next meeting they expect to have the changes regarding the bullying policy and the campaign literature policy ready for review. The campaign literature policy needs to be changed to be in compliance with election laws. The policy regarding the use of iPods is still being discussed by the committee.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Golschneider the Board of Education unanimously approved to go into Executive Session.

The Board moved back into open session.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Golschneider the Board of Education unanimously moved that the contract for employment for Marjorie Bruch, Amy Bonhag, and Susan Salvage not be renewed for the following school year upon their expiration at the end of this school year and that the Superintendent of Schools is directed to advise such persons in writing of this action.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Golschneider the Board of Education unanimously approved to adjourn.