

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, March 15, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. in the media center at Coginchaug High School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currlin, Mrs. Flanagan, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Raczka, Dr. Shoemaker. Also present: Mr. Gourley, Mrs. Viccaro.

Mr. Raczka called the meeting to order at 7:30p.m.

Public Comment: Tina Gossner, a Durham resident and parent of three children in the District is concerned and saddened about the state of education. She is concerned about the mandates coming from the State and the Federal Government, but more important, locally she is concerned about the high level of anxiety she is seeing in teachers throughout the District. Personally, as the sister of Lisa Larson, she is upset with how Lisa has been treated this year and with the proposed cut to the music position at the high school. She is concerned that the District has always been a supporter of fine arts and now cuts come from there first. She asked the Board to reconsider this cut and to look at how staff is being treated.

Jill Riggles, a Durham resident, music teacher, and parent of two high school juniors spoke in favor of keeping the music position at Coginchaug. She has worked with many school districts and wanted the Board to realize the strength and uniqueness of the music programs in the District. Since Ms. Larson has been at the high school full time she has also added two a capella groups and the madrigal choir to her responsibilities. If her time is split between two schools, Mrs. Riggles fears that these programs will not continue.

Teresa Opalacz, a Durham resident, parent in the District and a spokesperson for the parent groups, spoke in favor of keeping the class size policy intact. With the extra services that many children receive, even adding a couple of extra students per class will have an impact. Ms. Opalacz also asked if increasing the substitute budget last year has had an impact and if the use of substitutes is being monitored. Mr. Raczka responded that it was tracked last year and it is not excessive. Last year there was a very high number of pregnancies in the District that affected the substitute budget. Mr. Gourley said that so far this year \$190,000 has been spent in the substitute account and \$220,500 was budgeted. He expects to go over budget again this year.

Karen Meiman, a Durham resident, and parent of three children in the District, is concerned about cutting back on electives at the high school. Her daughter was unable to schedule an elective class this year because they were all full, forcing her to take a study hall. Mrs. Meiman is also concerned about the proposed busing changes. She has worked closely with the District on the routes in the past and she thinks that they are already efficient. She suggested that some savings might be found at the elementary levels. Dattco can run simulations of runs and the Board can see if they can live with the changes suggested. Mr. Gourley thanked Karen for the work she has done in the past on the routes. He said he is looking at ways to cut back on the routes at the high school since so many students drive anyway. Because the bus routes are so large and they have to travel to the ends of both towns, it is hard to find savings.

Next Board Meeting: The next Board of Education Meeting will be held at Brewster School on March 22, 2006.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Flanagan, the Board of Education unanimously approved the agenda.

Ms. Parsons make a motion, second Mrs. Flanagan, to approve the minutes to the March 8, 2006 Board of Education meeting as amended. Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currlin, Mrs. Flanagan, Mrs.

Golschneider, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Raczka, Dr. Shoemaker voted yes. Mr. Hennick abstained.

Communications: Mr. Raczka read a letter he received from State Senator Edward Meyers regarding the letter the Board sent to him concerning the Board's position on House Bill 6576. Senator Meyers will oppose the bill and will share the District's concerns with his colleagues.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro said an Internet Safety Night for parents is taking place at Coginchaug this Thursday night at 7:00pm. She is anticipating a good turnout.

Mrs. Viccaro reported that the Quebec trip for Strong students that the Board approved earlier this year has been cancelled due to low student interest.

Mrs. Viccaro said a town wide meeting on underage drinking is been held on March 28th at the Coginchaug library. Underage drinking was the main topic that participants at the last meeting wanted to discuss further. This town wide meeting is part of a nationwide event.

Mrs. Viccaro told Board members that in their packet was a copy of the activities held on March 2nd at Strong School on the test-taking phenomenon.

Mrs. Viccaro distributed a copy of the new list of teaching shortage areas as posted by the State Department of Education.

2006-07 Budget Discussion: Mrs. Viccaro distributed a handout with potential budget cuts listed in three tiers of approximately \$100,000 in each tier. The administrators met twice to develop this list of cuts. She explained that all of these cuts will impact kids and programs. The first tier is where the administrators would like to see the first cuts made. Mrs. Viccaro reviewed each of the items on the handout.

Mr. Gourley explained that many possibilities are being explored regarding insurance savings such as looking at other companies and possibly self-insuring.

Mr. Currilin questioned if it was time to revisit block scheduling since students are not getting into classes. Mrs. Luckenbach responded that the same problems existed with the prior scheduling plan. The District is small and can only offer one section of an elective and that makes it difficult for students to get into the elective of their choice.

Several Board members supported adding the music position back into the budget. It was determined that this would cost approximately \$30,000 for a part-time teacher.

The Board would like more information on money spent for communications. Suggestions were made for more email communication and black and white printing instead of color. Communication expenses will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Dr. Shoemaker is concerned about the Board cutting too far into this budget. The fund balance is currently at -\$10,000. He is concerned that if this budget can't be maintained next year, there is nothing to fall back on. He is also worried about the District's bond rating as well as the Board's need to decide how to fund the track, tennis courts and soccer field repairs.

Dr. Ochterski asked if BASREP rates could be increased. They have been paying the same rate of \$2,500 a month for the past two years.

Mr. Raczka asked the Board to think about cutting the remainder of the field trip budget. Parents are already funding 90% of the trips. If eliminated it shifts the burden to those doing the using. Mrs. Viccaro cautioned the Board that if the field trip budget were pulled completely, funding trip at schools that have many students on the free and reduced lunch program would be difficult. It was suggested that some additional money could be put into the activity accounts to help cover those students.

The Board would like more information on the stipend budget. Information will be gathered on the number of students in clubs and groups that use staff stipend positions. This way, if the Board chooses to make cuts in this area, they will know which positions effect the least amount of students.

After much discussion the following items are being considered for elimination from the budget: Tier I- Adult Ed (Middletown agreed to reduction in fees) \$8,000, Insurance (health insurance reduction) \$35,000, Central Office (supplies, etc.) \$3,000, Advertising (reduction) \$5,000, Water (elimination of most coolers) \$3,000, Music Lease (Strong special instruments) \$2,000, Special Ed supplies (general cut across the District) \$2,000, Printer at Memorial \$1,500, Curriculum (teacher materials for 7th grade science textbooks, getting for free from publisher) \$2,000 and adding receipts for students paying to park at the high school (\$25 each) \$4000 total. Tier II – Legal costs (reduction)\$5,000 and Elementary supplies (across three schools, asking parents to provide basic supplies) \$10,000.

The Board is also considering adding the music position back into the budget at a cost of \$30,000.

The Board decided to make no further cuts at this time. More discussion will be held at the final budget meeting next week.

Finance Committee: Dr. Shoemaker said the committee met tonight. Warrants are ahead of last year, but that was expected because of the fuel costs. Payroll is on target. The spending freeze is still in place. The Committee discussed the final State audits that were performed for the building projects at Memorial and Lyman schools. There may be some monetary impact of the audit, but the official report has not been received from the State. The Finance Committee discussed the money needed for the track and tennis courts and whether to bond it or take out a short-term loan. There is a strong feeling that it needs to get done for safety reasons. It is being considered as a second question at the referendum. The Committee also discussed communication with the Boards' of Finance in the towns. They would like to be able to see what they can do to open the lines of communication.

Magnet School: Mr. Hicks reported that they met last Thursday. Staffing will remain relatively the same for next year. Cheryl Saloom reported on the Magnet School task force update. If it passes, it will allow magnet schools to pull students from other towns to fill enrollment if the participating districts don't fill their slots. This will be a significant help to their budget. The student tuition rate for next was set at \$9,972. The State pays \$5,400 per student.

ACES: Mr. Currin reported that they are down to their final three candidates for executive director. They are conducting second interviews tomorrow.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Golschneider, the Board of Education unanimously approved to move into Executive Session to discuss Teacher Non-renewals.

The Board of Education moved into regular session.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Flanagan, the Board of Education unanimously moved that the contracts of employment for Kimberly Barris, Janice Carpenter, Christine Jakubiec, Lindsay Lohmeyer and Robert Woytowich not be renewed for the following school year upon their expiration at the end of this school year and that the Superintendent of School 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.