

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, December 14, 2005 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, Dr. Ochterski, Mr. Raczka, Dr. Shoemaker. Members absent: Mr. Hicks, Ms. Parsons. Also present: Mr. Gourley, Mrs. Viccaro.

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

Mr. Raczka welcomed Kerrie Flanagan as a new member of the Board of Education.

Public Comment: Denise Steele of Louis Road, Middlefield came to speak about a bus safety issue. This is the same location that was the topic of a transportation hearing this year. Mrs. Steele said they were told at the hearing that the only criteria they did not meet to allow the stop to be changed was the measurement of 20 feet or less between snow embankments. Since the recent snowstorm the measurement is less than this distance. Mrs. Steele spoke to Mr. Gourley about her concerns last week. He said he was going to contact the highway department to correct the problem and get back to her. She has not heard back from Mr. Gourley. Mrs. Steele spoke with the highway foreman herself and he said that he could not guarantee that the road can be cleared to that measurement on a consistent basis. Mrs. Steele does not feel that they should have to meet any more of the criteria to get the stop changed.

Donia Viola, a Durham resident, spoke with Dr. Shoemaker by phone today. She said that Dr. Shoemaker was very disrespectful and hung up on her. She feels that he has a responsibility to the citizens to talk with them, it was an unkind response and she wanted it noted in the record.

Next Board Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Education will be held at Strong School on January 11, 2006.

On a motion by Mr. Hennick, second Mrs. Adams, the Board of Education unanimously approved to amend the agenda, moving Presentations before the Superintendent's report.

On a motion by Dr. Shoemaker, second Mrs. Adams, the minutes of the Board of Education meeting of November 9, 2005 were approved as corrected. Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currlin, Mr. Hennick, Dr. Ochterski, Mr. Raczka, Dr. Shoemaker voted yes. Mrs. Flanagan, Mrs. Golschneider abstained.

Communications: Dr. Shoemaker received two letters. One concerned last year's budget vote. The second was from Mrs. Viola regarding the total amount spent on buses and the use of District phones for personal calls.

Superintendent's Award Students: Mrs. Viccaro attended the Superintendents' Award Luncheon at Saybrook Point Inn in November with the parents of the award winners while the students were on the senior trip to Washington, DC. This year's recipients are Jessica Embacher and Jeffrey Francis. Mrs. Viccaro presented each of them a gift on behalf of the Board of Education.

2006 Teacher of the Year: Mrs. Viccaro presented Carl Bruenn, District 13 Teacher of the Year, with a gift from the District. She read a letter that was written on his behalf by Kevin Brough that went with his packet to the state level.

Mr. Raczka thanked Mr. Bruenn for all that he does for the kids in the District. Mr. Bruenn received a standing ovation from the Board of Education.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro gave Board members a copy of a class action lawsuit filed by the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding. This group is looking to sue the State of Connecticut because of the way that education is funded. The suit was brought primarily by large cities but it could have an impact on smaller towns as well.

Mrs. Viccaro attended the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce breakfast yesterday. The Coginchaug Jazz Band played and was very well received. She attended the local chamber meeting today and people were still talking about how great they were.

On December 7th an all day assembly was held at Coginchaug entitled "Names Can Really Hurt Us". The Anti-Defamation League put on this assembly. Forty student volunteers were trained as facilitators. It was a very emotional, powerful day. Of 520 evaluations received, only one student gave the day a "fair" rating, all the rest were "excellent" or "good".

Mrs. Viccaro said the high school had graffiti on it on Friday night, December 2nd. Although there was a considerable amount, they were able to remove it all the next day. There was a bomb scare at Coginchaug on December 6th. This morning the fire alarm was pulled at Coginchaug.

Mrs. Viccaro reported that a Flu Clinic is being provided for staff next Monday. There will be no cost to the District.

Mrs. Viccaro said the football team is being moved into the Pequot League and will now be competing against more shoreline teams.

Mrs. Viccaro showed the Board the Connecticut Mastery Test Language Arts Handbook that was just received from the State. She reviewed some of the changes in this area. She is concerned that teachers will have very little time to react to the changes before this year's testing begins.

Mrs. Viccaro is hearing that teachers are feeling very stressed and they need to focus more of their time on teaching. She would like the Board to consider holding off on some of the strategic planning initiatives for this year to allow teachers more time to teach. She suggested holding off on: Learning Style Inventories for Grade 5, automating the card catalogs at the libraries at Memorial and Strong Schools, aligning school and classroom discipline with the Core Ethical Values, implementing the recommendations of the Connectedness Committee and revision of the social studies curriculum. Mr. Raczka asked that the Board be able to consider this request and discuss it at a later meeting.

Mrs. Viccaro attended a recent meeting of superintendents in our Consortium. SAT classes are planned for the spring, a student leadership workshop is scheduled for February 3rd and 4th, a Diversity Conference for Strong School students is scheduled at Wesleyan, and a career fair is scheduled for April.

Mr. Hennick asked what students' reactions were to the bomb threat. Mrs. Viccaro and Mr. Gourley said they were annoyed and upset but orderly. A debriefing was held with the State Police and they felt that everything was handled well.

Preliminary 2006-07 Budget Discussions: Mr. Raczka reviewed the budget process. He is concerned about the impact of last year's budget vote on next year's budget.

Mr. Gourley said that the costs that the District has little control over have the greatest impact on the budget. He estimated increases in health insurance and other benefits to be approximately \$375,000; energy (heating oil and electricity) increases approximately \$205,000; to meet criteria stipulated in bargaining contracts an approximate \$800,000 increase; and

transportation and fuel for buses an approximate \$85,000 increase. This total represents a 5.1% increase over the current budget.

Mrs. Viccaro said she expects to see requests for additional textbooks at the high school level. She said there would also be technology needs that should be addressed, such as licensing fees and costs to meet some of our strategic planning initiatives.

Requests are starting to come in from the buildings, Mrs. Viccaro and Mr. Gourley will begin putting the budget together during the break.

Mr. Gourley said that \$4.5 million of the \$29 million in this year's budget is for special education. The budget for special education is always difficult to determine from year to year, as student needs change. The District will now also be responsible for testing special education students at the private schools in our towns.

Mr. Raczka said that class sizes are being reviewed. He wants the classes at the high school reviewed to see if any can be expanded to accommodate more students without compromising the class and also to see if we are offering courses that have low enrollments or are outdated.

Mrs. Viccaro said she has also asked that the guidance department review what classes students requested this year that they were shut out of.

Mrs. Golschneider asked if any students have been identified at IDS or at the nursery schools as having special education needs that will be covered by the District. Mrs. Viccaro will check with Amy Emory, Pupil Personnel Director, and report back to the Board at the next meeting.

Garden Club Landscaping: Mrs. Viccaro wanted to publicly thank the Durham Garden Club for the work they have done both at Cuginchaug and at Strong School. She encouraged Board members to look at the courtyard. She said they are looking into getting benches in the spring with additional donations for the area.

8th Grade French Trip to Canada: May 31-June 4, 2006: Cynthia Kuzman, French teacher from Strong School, was present and presented the itinerary for the trip. This is the second time the school has been involved in this field trip. The last time was two years ago, but it was with a different company.

On a motion by Mr. Currilin, second Mr. Hennick, the Board of Education unanimously approved the 8th Grade French Trip to Quebec, Canada from May 31, 2006 to June 4, 2006.

2006-07 School Calendar: Mrs. Viccaro presented a preliminary calendar that was developed by the administrative counsel. Dr. Shoemaker is concerned that there are only 181 student days when the contract says that there can be 182 days. The number of days was reduced when the building projects began and it hasn't been brought back up to 182 since then. He would like to see it return. Mrs. Viccaro will have to look at the calendar again because with the number of days that staff is expected to be at professional development activities the calendar is already at the maximum of 187 days for teachers.

Building Committee: Mr. Currilin reported that the Committee is starting to work on closing out the high school project. He hopes the Committee will be able to begin meeting as a smaller group and reduce the number of Committee meetings.

Mrs. Adams asked if full-time grant writers are cost effective in other school districts. Mrs. Viccaro will talk to superintendents of similar districts to see if they have been successful.

Transportation Committee: Dr. Ochterski said the committee is still looking into options for a bus depot.

Buildings and Grounds: Mr. Hennick said he has been in close contact with Mr. Lombardo regarding the fundraising for the track. Mr. Lombardo said that the community has been receptive and donation checks have been coming in. He has not done a community wide mailing yet and a mailing will be going out to local businesses.

Finance Committee: Dr. Shoemaker said he has reports for the Finance Committee.

Personnel Policies: Dr. Shoemaker said all parties have signed the nurses' contract.

On a motion by Mr. Currin, second Dr. Shoemaker the Board of Education unanimously approved to go into Executive Session to discuss Administrators' Evaluations.

The Board of Education moved back into regular session.

On a motion by Mr. Hennick, second Dr. Shoemaker, the Board of Education unanimously approved to adjourn.