

The Regional District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, March 22, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currilin, Mrs. Flanagan, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Raczka, Dr. Shoemaker. Also present: Mrs. Viccaro, Mr. Gourley.

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

Public Comment: Todd Salva spoke about keeping freshmen basketball in the budget. He stated there are not enough spots on the JV team for all the freshmen. This gives them a chance to play and keeps the continuity to the JV and Varsity programs.

John DeMeo asked to the Board to be cautious when making cuts to the budget. Teachers were already told to come in with a lower or not to exceed budget. There are no frills to this budget. He would not like to see the education of the students compromised. He stated most people move into town because of the school system and know what the taxes would be.

Susan Michael stated the science budget at the high school has had cuts to it over the past few years and it is hard to schedule the classes the students would like to take because of under staffing. She also stated most people move into town because of the school system and are aware of what their taxes will be.

Tammy Stewart, Jennifer Phanuef and Mary Foreman spoke about the importance of small class sizes at the elementary level. Students are still learning social skills as well as their academics. Small group or individual instruction is also important at that age. The larger the class size, the less time teachers have to spend with individual students.

Donia Viola said there is only so much taxpayers can afford. She said going back with the same budget last year as was voted down the first time was a bad tactic by the Board.

Joe DellaVentura stated it is hard for people to continually sustain a high tax increase. Most people only get a 2-3% raise and yet budget increases are usually 5-6%. The school budget continues to increase and the towns suffer because they have to decrease their budgets to offset that increase. He felt the Board should have made cuts to the budget before it was resubmitted last year and maybe that would have made this year a little easier. Mr. DellaVentura said Durham has one of the highest taxes in the State. Also the surrounding towns have a smaller per pupil expenditure than Durham.

Tina Gossner thanked the Board for considering keeping the .4 music position in the budget. She is concerned that the Board of Selectmen is dictating to the Board of Education about making cuts to the education budget. She also would not like to see freshmen basketball cut.

Gary Tickey stated he moved to Durham for the educational system. He is in support of small class sizes and realizes the Board is trying to maintain an excellent school system.

Pam Lang stated she appreciates that the Board of Selectmen's concern is the function of the entire town but it is impossible to ask the Board of Education to make substantial cuts without affecting the educational system. Any substantial cuts will affect the education of the students.

Teresa Opalacz stated the Board needs to plan for substantial cuts in the fall. It is too late to begin in March. She supports both low class sizes and freshmen basketball.

A couple of parents spoke about keeping the .4 music position in the budget. Jill Riggles said sometimes the budget is voted down because of what is taken out not about it being too high.

Next Board Meeting: The next Board of Education meeting will be April 5, 2006 at CRHS. The Board meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the library. The Board will adjourn to attend the Public Hearing at 8:00 p.m. in the auditorium and reconvene in the library after the public hearing.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Dr. Shoemaker, the agenda was unanimously approved.

On a motion by Dr. Shoemaker, second Mrs. Golschneider, the minutes to the March 15, 2006 Board of Education meeting were unanimously approved.

Communications: Board members received several phone calls on the budget regarding class size, freshmen basketball and the Strong School music position.

Mr. Hennick attending the Read Across America program at Korn School last Friday that was very enjoyable.

The Board received four letters. One from the first selectmen thanking Mrs. Viccaro, Mr. Gourley and Mr. Raczka for meeting with them to discuss the towns' and the education budgets. Elvin Riggles sent a letter to the Board in support of keeping the .4 music position in the budget. He stated the cut would have a tremendous impact on the whole music program in the District. The Board also received a letter signed by 65 students stating their support for the Strong School music position. The last letter was from Jessica Loffredo, a second grade teacher at Brewster, stating the importance of small class sizes at the elementary level.

Mr. Raczka said that the meeting with the first selectmen also included Ray Kalinowski and Ed Myers. Many ideas were shared at the meeting including asking Mr. Kalinowski and Mr. Myers to help to get the funding increased at the state level.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro reported about 100 people attended the Internet safety meeting last Thursday. The presenter showed parents what they need to do to keep their children safe.

Mrs. Viccaro attended the Read Across America at Korn, the Scholarship Ball and Memorial's instrumental night.

The Board received articles from Mrs. Viccaro on the Mastery Tests and Technology. Two parents from other districts have refused to have their children take the mastery tests. One student has a disability and the parent felt it was too stressful for him to take the test, and the other parent stated she felt the school knew her child's abilities and the test wasn't necessary. The State Department stated it is not an option to not take the test and they are working on a solution.

Mrs. Viccaro invited the Selectmen from both towns to meet and discuss the budget challenges to the towns and the school district. Many ideas were shared and questions were answered.

Finalize 2006-07 Budget for the Public Hearing: Mr. Gourley began by stating after the last meeting's discussion the printing and documents account was reviewed and \$2000 more can be deducted. The receipts can be increased to include \$15,000 from an in-house special education program and \$10,000 from the proposed new rates for building use. The Policy Committee is reviewing a new policy that will include an energy fee for people using the buildings to help with the increasing energy and fuel costs.

Dr. Shoemaker stated he would not like to see too much cut out of the budget because the fund balance carryover is at a negative \$10,000. If there are any unforeseen issues that come up next year there isn't anything in the fund balance carryover to help absorb the cost.

Mrs. Flanagan stated the Board needs to think about the whole community. The cuts tonight are tough but there are also issues in the town budgets that are tough decisions. The Board needs to think about long-term benefits as well as short-term solutions. Things are removed from the town budgets to cover the cost of the education budget.

Mr. Raczka stated the Board needs to review the proposed budget cuts developed by Mrs. Viccaro and the administrators. The Board reviewed the Tier I items. They decided to keep in Freshmen basketball, athletics, CRHS supplies and the Strong School Social Studies item. The total for the reductions in Tier I was \$76,500. In Tier II \$5000 in legal costs, \$10,000 in elementary supplies and \$10,000 in field trips was deducted. The \$7,000 left in field trips is to cover the costs of the trips for students who are unable to pay. They also deducted the \$2,000 from printing/documents. They decided not to take anything from the Tier III list. They felt that anything from this list would substantially affect the educational system. Some members felt that the Board had taken enough out of the budget. If the budget goes down they will discuss the other items on the list.

The receipts to the budget include: \$4000 for student pay to park, \$15,000 in an in-house special education program and \$10,000 in a new rate schedule for building use for a total of \$29,000.

The Board discussed the .4 music position at Strong School. The decision was to put the .4 music position back into the budget. The cost would be \$30,000. To make up for the \$30,000 increase the Board took the following deductions: \$6362 CRHS supplies, \$638 Strong School Social Studies, \$15,000 additional dollars in insurance, \$5,000 from stipends and \$3,000 from athletics.

The gross educational budget was reduced by \$103,500 for a total gross budget of \$30,753,955.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, second Mr. Hennick to go to the public hearing on the education budget with a total gross Regional District 13 budget of \$30,753,955. Mr. Hicks, Mr. Hennick, Mrs. Golschneider, Dr. Shoemaker, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Raczka, Mrs. Adams, Dr. Ochterski, Mr. Currlin voted yes. Mrs. Flanagan voted no.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mr. Currlin, the Board of Education approved to hold a District Meeting on the 2006-07 Regional District 13 education budget on May 1, 2006 followed by an all day referendum on May 2, 2006.

Policy Committee: Dr. Shoemaker reported the committee discussed the On Campus Recruitment Policy and the Use of School Facilities Policy. Both policy revisions will be discussed again at the next Policy Committee meeting and then will be brought to the whole Board for review. The Use of School Facilities policy has a new rate schedule to include an energy cost fee.

Building and Grounds: Mr. Hennick reported the committee discussed increasing the fee that BASREP pays, but their enrollment has declined and at this point that is not an option. They also discussed looking again at the site they checked on last year for a bus depot. The ultimate goal is to get it on property the District owns.

The committee began discussion regarding putting a sign in front of the school complex on Main Street to display the activities at the schools.

Personnel Policies: Mr. Hennick reported the committee began to discuss the contracts of the Superintendent and Assistant to the Superintendent.

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