

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, May 16, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. in the media center at Coginchaug High School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currin, 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 7:30 p.m.

Public Comment: Donia Viola spoke about the article in the Town Times comparing District 13 to District 17. She found inaccuracies in the article and said although the communities are similar, District 17 has more students and more instructors. Mrs. Viola also feels that teachers should be responsible for getting their own technology CEU's, as they are expected to do in industry. She feels too many subs are used to support the HOT school program at Lyman and there are too many guidance counselors at the high school.

Tom Palmieri asked if the transportation suggestion from last week was investigated and if it would be discussed tonight. Mr. Gourley said it would be discussed later in the meeting.

Jeremy Renninghoff mentioned the articles in the Town Times that discussed the number of administrators in the District. He does not feel they have a direct impact on students and this is where cuts should be made.

Many residents spoke in favor of keeping the 6<sup>th</sup> grade Integrated Day teacher at Memorial. Increasing the class to 25 or 26 students per class is too many students and they urged the Board to reconsider.

Pam Lang said the Technology Coordinator and the Curriculum Director both directly effect students and to say otherwise is absolutely incorrect.

Paul Sutterlin thanked the Board for the work they do and cautioned the Board about cutting too deep or a no vote may be saying the cuts have gone too far.

Richard Parmelee praised the 1<sup>st</sup> Selectmen of the towns for speaking up about the budget. He feels this is a positive step. He also believes cutting a couple of administrators is the best cut to make.

Rob Proctor suggested resubmitting the same budget. He wonders if maybe it was too low.

Ernie Judson supported the budget the first time because he has faith in the ability of the Board of Education. The Board does not have control over State mandates and NCLB. He is also concerned about the class sizes at Memorial School and asked the Board to keep the position if they could.

Chris Davis, a teacher at Lyman said that class size is very important. Teachers use individualized instruction and smaller groups are necessary.

Several residents spoke in support of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade instrumental music program. Many children benefit from the program and studies show that beginning an instrument before age twelve is important.

Brian Curry feels it is important to keep all after school programs, both sports and instrumental.

Rebecca Adams is a member of the Middlefield Board of Finance. She supports this budget and urged everyone to call ten people they know to get them to vote to pass it.

Joseph Neri asked if the insurance has been renegotiated and if the savings will be \$600,000 as he has heard and he also asked the Board to speak about the "rainy day fund" reported to be \$600,000 as well. Mr. Raczka said that the both of these figures are incorrect but he will address both items later in the meeting.

Diane Rossborough is a parent who was on the Strategic Planning Team. She reminded Board members that differentiated instruction was one of the main focuses of the five-year strategic plan. A small student-teacher ratio must be maintained to implement differentiated instruction.

Richard Parmelee is strongly opposed to pay-for-play. This is a public school system and everyone should have the same opportunity. He feels that the plan will hurt people.

Ernie Judson said that he is sure that civic organizations such as the Exchange Club or the Lyons Club would step forward to help with students who are unable to participate because of financial reasons.

Next Board Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Education will be on May 17, 2006 at Coginchaug High School. This meeting may be cancelled if the Board finalizes the budget this evening. The next regular meeting will be at Brewster School on May 24, 2006.

On a motion by Dr. Shoemaker, second Mrs. Adams, the Board of Education unanimously approved the agenda.

Mr. Hennick made a motion, second Dr. Shoemaker, to approve the minutes to the May 10, 2006 Board of Education meeting. Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currin, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Raczka, Dr. Shoemaker voted yes. Mrs. Flanagan abstained.

Communications: None.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro attended The State Latin Day today with 2400 students from across the state. Despite the rainy weather it was a wonderful event.

2006-07 Budget: Mrs. Viccaro pointed out information posted at the back of the room that shows where District 13 teachers and administrators fall on a salary schedule compared to surrounding towns. They clearly show that District 13 is below average for the area in salary. A handout was distributed to everyone showing the possible budget reductions discussed so far as well as additional cuts being proposed by the administrators this evening.

Mr. Raczka clarified that the health insurance negotiations are still ongoing. Coverage with the new carrier is being compared and the bargaining groups have to approve the agreement before the District can realize any savings. The savings are not as significant as the \$600,000 figure that was suggested earlier. Mr. Raczka said there is no "rainy day fund". The State would like the District to have a fund balance of 3-5% to be used for emergencies. Currently the District has a negative fund balance because of the building projects.

Mrs. Viccaro said that heating and electricity increases have been felt significantly. Even though the District is part of a consortium for both oil and electricity the costs are still very high and our facilities are large and expensive to operate.

Mrs. Viccaro spoke about the need for both the Curriculum Director and the Special Education Coordinator. She said the Curriculum Director is a critical role with many aspects of the position that directly impact children. The Special Education Coordinator along with the Pupil Personnel Director is responsible for 80 staff and 270 students. It is just too much for one person to handle with the new IEP and State mandates.

Mr. Gourley commented that special education is an area fertile for litigation. To have one less administrator monitoring this area would be very risky.

Mr. Raczka said there is money being held by the State for the building projects until they are closed out and audited. This money has already been put into next year's budget to help offset expenses and to replace the fund balance.

Mr. Gourley said the suggestion presented last week for the changes to the bus routes is being reviewed by the Transportation Committee and by Dattco. It is being pursued as an alternative. It may have some impact on the budget but there is not enough time to review the option before this budget needs to be finalized.

Mrs. Golschneider questioned the computer site license cut of \$6,000 presented for the first time tonight. It will affect the number of users that can be on a program at any given moment. It will be a scheduling challenge, but it can be managed.

Dr. Ochterski wanted to make it clear that the cuts they were considering were one time cuts. The Board may be in this position again next year and the public can't expect them to make cuts like this again.

Mr. Raczka questioned the number of guidance counselors in the District. There is one counselor at Strong and three at Coginchaug. Each counselor at the high school is responsible for approximately 170 students.

A cut of \$15,000 is proposed from the professional development account, an additional \$6,000 from the advertising budget, \$4,000 for summer curriculum writing and \$3,000 for a Smart Board.

Mrs. Viccaro said that if any more cuts are made they will impact class size at the elementary level. There is no place else to make additional cuts.

Mrs. Viccaro said that twelve teachers will be retiring at the end of 2008 and the District will see some savings then.

Mrs. Flanagan questioned whether all students must have a seat on the bus regardless of whether they ride the bus. Mr. Gourley responded that the State told him that a seat must be available if requested. Mr. Gourley said it is very hard to cut buses and not increase route times.

Mr. Hicks asked if there has been any progress on relocating the buses to District property. Mr. Gourley said that the budget has taken priority but that Dr. Ochterski has met with town officials to discuss a possible site. The District is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a 5-year lease.

Mrs. Viccaro said that custodial and secretarial staff has been reviewed. She does not recommend any cuts to custodians and the offices are already understaffed.

Mr. Gourley read from information submitted by Mr. Francis regarding the custodial coverage in the buildings. He does not feel that the coverage can be reduced.

It was the general consensus of the Board that they did not want to go any farther with cuts. The cuts at this point total \$293,168.00. This is 16% less than the original budget that was presented to voters on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The Board discussed the wording of the referendum question. They considered having the voters be able to say yes or no, too high or no, too low as choices on the ballot. It was decided that it may be too risky with two no choices. Voters may feel they have the power to bring back a program by voting the budget down.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, second Mrs. Flanagan to hold a referendum on May 31, 2006 on the proposed 2006-2007 Regional District 13 education budget for a total of \$30,460,787 preceded by a District Meeting to be held on May 30, 2006. Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currin, Mrs. Flanagan, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Raczka, Dr. Shoemaker voted yes. Mr. Hennick voted no.

Mr. Raczka cancelled the May 17, 2006 Board of Education meeting.

Mr. Gourley explained that because the pay-to-play is a receipt it is not in the total budget just voted on by the Board. Pay-to-play receipts are estimated to be approximately \$15,000. Each of the Board members gave their opinion on pay-to-play. The Board is very split on this issue. It was decided that if additional money becomes available from the State the Board would like to revisit this issue.

Policy Committee: Mr. Hicks said members were receiving the Use of School Facilities Policy for their review. The attorney is also in the process of reviewing the policy. Mr. Hicks would like the Board to vote on this policy at the May 24<sup>th</sup> meeting so that information can be sent to all organizations that use the facilities.

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