

DRAFT – Subject to Change

Board of Education

Regional District 13

October 24, 2007

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, October 24, 2007 at 7:30 p.m. in the music room at Brewster School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currin, Mrs. Flanagan, Ms. Gara, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Dr. Shoemaker. Member absent: Mrs. Golschneider. Also present: Mr. Melnik, Mrs. Viccaro.

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

Public Comment: Susan Michael, a teacher at Coginchaug and parent of a Coginchaug sophomore spoke on behalf of the newly formed group of track supporters. They would like to see a new track built in the next two years. There has not been a home track meet in the last two years; no other track in the Shoreline Conference is in as poor shape. A fundraising drive was held two years ago and there are still no plans on how to move forward. They would like to move forward this year with a vote to build a new track and tennis courts. This group of parents is very willing to help to seek grants and to do whatever is necessary to help to move the process forward quickly.

Lou Batapaglia is concerned about safety issues. His son was hurt because of the poor condition of our playing fields and the District should be concerned that others will be hurt on either the track or the tennis courts because of their very poor condition.

Kevin Charette said the track is in extremely poor condition; if Coginchaug had a warped gym floor the District would never let it go unfixed, they would act quickly to fix it. The track should be no different. Track is a core sport, it needs to be invested in and maintained. Parents are ready to step in and act. The Board needs a plan.

John Andrulis has a son in the program and a daughter who will be playing soon. He wants her to be able to play on a safe and enjoyable soccer field. He also feels that it is not just one sport or program that needs attention but the entire infrastructure. The District can not afford to wait another five years to get this done.

Gary Solomone has a son and a daughter playing tennis and soccer and four more children in the District. He said the courts are very dangerous. He also feels the money needs to get spread around to support upgrades to the entire complex and not support just one area.

Nicole Brunette is the President of FOCUS, the group that supports soccer at Coginchaug. She feels the fields are an embarrassment to the District and parents and students have been waiting patiently for the repairs to be completed. The only changes she has seen happening have been to the Pee Wee football field and that is not a District run program.

Greg Frank, a student at Coginchaug plays on the tennis team. He said they use both the school courts and the town courts and the school courts are in much worse shape.

Karen Kean, the tennis coach, said the District used to be known for our wonderful campus complex. The planning was well done for the field areas. She would like to see improvements and upgrades to all of the fields as she has seen in the other shoreline towns.

Paula Bedding, a Coginchaug parent, said it is a shame that her child can't even practice the long jump event that she competes in. Kids have to use the track meets as their practice and because of that they always come in last.

Ted Lombardo, Athletic Director, was asked to comment. He agrees that the track and tennis courts have the greatest need but all of the fields on the left side of the road have lacked maintenance and need money put into them. He agrees with the public that they have waited long enough.

Mr. Hennick said the difficult budget season a couple of years ago led the Board to put off any repairs to the athletic complex. The Board is in the process of putting together a plan that will be put forward to the public soon. He said the Board will need the help and support of the public present to gain the general public support. Mr. Hennick said that it was discussed at a meeting with the selectmen this morning and although they all generally support the need for work to be done there was still some resistance to support grants for this purpose.

Ms. Gara said she is very supportive of the athletic program and would like to see this as a top priority for the Board.

Mrs. Adams asked the public to be sure to let their selectman know how they feel.

Mr. Currin thanked everyone for coming and said a discussion of the athletic fields comes up at every meeting. There are plans in the works and the Board will be sharing them soon.

Mrs. Viccaro said she will be looking for the groups present to come together for more input and to share concerns as the Board moves forward with a plan.

Mrs. Flanagan said the Building and Grounds Committee has met and discussed all the capital needs throughout the District so the District doesn't find themselves in the same position again. The Long Range Planning Committee is currently reviewing several different options to meet the needs of the District. The Board definitely hears the public.

Mr. Hennick also thanked people for coming and asked for their help in gaining support for the plan from the general public.

Next Board Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Education will be held on November 14, 2007 at Coghinchaug High School.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Adams the Board of Education unanimously approved to amend the agenda to include a Presentation on CABE and an Anticipated Executive Session to Discuss a Personnel Matter Regarding a Teacher.

Dr. Shoemaker made a motion, second Mr. Currin to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 17, 2007. Mr. Currin, Ms. Gara, Mr. Hennick, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Dr. Shoemaker voted yes. Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Flanagan and Mr. Hicks abstained.

Communications: Mr. Hennick said at the meeting with the selectmen held this morning they talked about applying for grants to redo the track and tennis courts but it was met with some reluctance because the selectman look more globally at the needs of the town.

CABE: Bob Rader from CABE explained to Board members about the services CABE has to offer Boards of Education. They are an advocacy organization for BOE's. CABE has lawyers on staff that are available to answer questions for members at any time. They offer workshops for new board members on goal setting and on FOI. Regional and statewide meetings are held. Policy manuals and updates are available and they can make District policy manual available on-line. The cost of membership per district is \$8000.00 per year but because the District has not been a member for several years the 1st year trial member fee would be at half price but the District would not have any rights to vote at meetings. Only 23 towns in the state do not belong to CABE.

Mrs. Viccaro said she has attended CABE's conferences as a CAPSS member and has found them to be very valuable. The cost of the conferences significantly increases as a non-member.

Mr. Currin said that the reason CABE was cut from the District budget was because of cost. He said that Middletown utilizes CABE fully. He feels strongly that it should be put back into the budget. The District needs more voice in Hartford.

Mrs. Adams feels that lobbying is the most important thing that CABE can do for the District but she doesn't think they did a good job in their attempt work on some of the issues that passed through the recent legislative session.

Dr. Ochterski asked if the number of delegates is based on the student population of the District, will the large town issues prevail at meetings. Mr. Radar said that generally the same issues are important to all Boards of Education and most votes are close to unanimous.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro showed a brochure from a summer camp run by North Branford in partnership with area towns. Over 1000 kids attended last summer. Students from our District will have the option to attend next year.

The Site Planning for the high school took place last weekend and was very successful. It will be reported on further at a future Board of Education meeting.

Mrs. Viccaro distributed two documents from CABE and CAPSS entitled, "School Governance Position Statement" and "Successful Strategies for Leadership Team Evaluation".

Mrs. Viccaro said that information has been given to all the school principals regarding the recent outbreaks of MRSA. The custodial staff has all reviewed the information and is being vigilant about cleaning.

Mrs. Viccaro had a meeting with the new headmaster of the Independent Day School. He questioned the state guidelines for health services for private schools. It appears that a 1993 guideline states that the same health services must be provided to nonprofit private schools as public schools. Towns and school districts are responsible for this service. IDS currently has only a part-time nurse on staff. Mrs. Viccaro is still trying to determine the impact this will have for the District after the needs of the school are determined. Apparently IDS was also unaware of the guideline until now.

Mrs. Viccaro passed around a brochure developed by Eida Hinson-Yokubinas for parents of English Language Learners describing the program in the District. A meeting was recently held for these families.

Business Managers Report: Mr. Melnik said the Finance subcommittee met recently. The recent changes in the 403B legislation were discussed. In the past the District was just considered remitters; now the District will have a fiduciary responsibility. Over the next several months the details of the plan will all be worked out.

Mr. Melnik told the Board that he will be asking them to vote on an actuarial service at the next meeting. As a result of GASB 43/45 the District must report all unfunded liabilities and staff accrued sick days are considered an unfunded liability. An actuarial service will be used to collect this information.

Mr. Melnik said the football sign is up. The lighting was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission with some restrictions but the league has decided to delay installation until the spring.

At the meeting with the selectmen the potential bus depot was discussed further. The selectmen want to keep moving forward with the plan. The district is working with the town engineer, Brian Curtis, on site issues.

A meeting was held last week at the School Facilities Unit in Hartford to review the Korn School project costs. The State was claiming that \$800,000 was ineligible for reimbursement. It was a positive meeting, by the end of the meeting the ineligibles were only \$176,000 more than Mr. Melnik anticipated.

Changes to the cafeterias have been implemented. Mark Basil, the new Director of Dining Services has been doing well, there have been a few bumps in the road, but the feedback has generally been positive.

Brewster School: Nancy Heckler gave a presentation on the 07-08 Goals for Brewster School. She discussed the Comprehensive & Responsive Reading Program, The Literacy Team, the DIBELS assessment of reading skills test and the new math program that was implemented this school year. Brewster is partnering with a Colchester School, sharing information gathered from the DIBELS assessments. Colchester has been doing this for a year already so they have been a valuable resource for the school. Mrs. Heckler said that students, teachers, and parents have been very excited about the new math program and she will be putting it in their budget again.

Mrs. Heckler also talked about the difficulty in scheduling all that needs to get done in kindergarten with the kindergarten day being only 2 hours and 40 minutes long. She said that Brewster school has lost 13 kindergarten students since registration this year to extended day or full day kindergarten programs because parents do not feel the time is enough. Mrs. Heckler encouraged the Board members to think creatively for any way to extend the kindergarten day.

Finance Committee: Ms. Parsons said the Finance Committee met last Thursday. A meeting is being scheduled with BASREP to discuss next year's lease. It should take place before the next meeting (Mr. Melnik received an email that it may have to be rescheduled). The committee talked about the financial issues that will be discussed at the Board Retreat this coming weekend. The pension plan for non-certified staff is going to be redone. It has received many complaints and is very confusing. Mr. Melnik is working on model budget formats, internal ones and ones to present to the public. The finance Committee will have them ready to look at by January.

Magnet School: Mr. Hicks said the Magnet School Committee met earlier this month. There is a new math team leader and they have also hired another reading consultant. New lap-top computers have been given to all students. The school is continuing to work on their objectives for their school improvement plan. Attendance is slightly down at the magnet school, although 6th grade attendance is up. Current attendance is 753 out of 800. District 13 has 21 students attending. New legislation states that if a child wants to go to a magnet school that the district is not partnered, with the district must pay if the school has the room for the child. Transportation costs are not the responsibility of the District.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Adams the Board of Education unanimously approved to move into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter.

The Board moved into open session.

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