

DRAFT – subject to change

Board of Education

Regional District 13

September 6, 2007

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, August 22, 2007 at 7:30 p.m. in the library at Memorial Middle School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mr. Curren, Mrs. Flanagan, Ms. Gara, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Dr. Shoemaker. Member absent: Mrs. Golschneider. Also present: Mr. Melnick, Mrs. Viccaro.

Mr. Hennick called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Public Comment: Donia Viola had three concerns. She was surprised the taxpayers were told that a computer lab didn't exist at Memorial School when she knows that they did have one. She said the test scores didn't surprise her; you don't always get what you pay for. Mrs. Viola is also concerned that BASREP has been allowed to continue when they have gotten so far behind in rent. She was also upset with the way her FOI request was handled by Mr. Melnik at the meeting she attended with BASREP.

Raffaella Fronc, of Chalker Road, Durham, distributed copies of the letters sent to the Board of Education Office and the response received regarding the neighborhood request for a bus to go up Shunpike Road. She is not happy with the District response to their request. One of the District arguments against allowing a bus to travel up the street is the narrow width of the road. Mrs. Fronc said they took measurements on several other streets in town that are less than the recommended 24ft minimum requirement and buses travel down these roads every day.

Mr. Melnik said he went to the area with a DATTCO representative. They brought a bus to the site. In some areas the road was less than 16ft wide. The bus company did not feel that it was safe. They looked at the road condition and the gravel pit at the end of the road. The suggestion to turn it into a one-way road at certain times of the day was the best solution they could come up with.

Tom Geness is concerned about the safety aspect of the children walking on the road with tri-axle trucks and logging trucks in the area.

Tim Mack measured other roads and said many of them have twists and turns and are much less safe than Shunpike Road. Shunpike is a very straight road and there is no reason that a bus shouldn't be able to go down it. He understands that it cannot go up Chalker Road.

Janice Keeman of Chalker Road said she passes by the full size dump trucks and has no problem. She wonders if DATTCO is reluctant to add the street because of a timing issue in getting to the schools. She hopes that the process will move along quickly and that the Board will think logically about the residents' arguments.

Steve Buckheit thanked the District for hiring a diverse group of teachers this year. He hopes that the practice continues. The District needs to consider ways to further ethnic diversity within the community.

Gary Sawicki is concerned about the condition of the athletic fields at Cuginchaug. It has been a very dry August and the fields are getting a lot of playing time. The soccer fields are being practiced on. The District needs to try to find a better solution to improve the fields. The District fields are well below the standards of all the others in the league.

The next meeting of the Board of Education will be held at Korn Elementary School on September 26, 2007.

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

On a motion by Dr. Shoemaker, second Mrs. Adams the Board of Education unanimously approved the minutes to the meeting of August 22, 2007.

Communications: Mr. Hicks said he attended the opening day meeting. He thanked Tom for his words of wisdom to the staff on behalf of the Board.

Dr. Shoemaker said he received a call from a parent who was concerned that a teacher told a student that parents shouldn't email teachers because "they never read their email". Mrs. Viccaro said the parent should be told to bring the concern to the principal. All teachers at Coginchaug read email.

Mrs. Flanagan received calls regarding the NESDEC report. She was told the town library doesn't have any more copies. More copies will be made and brought to the libraries and they will be asked to keep one as a desk copy.

Ms. Gara said she received several emails regarding field use between soccer and football.

Mrs. Adams received calls regarding the NESDEC study. People want to know the Board's thoughts on the study.

Mr. Hennick said he attended the opening meeting and then went to several of the schools on opening day. He said everyone was happy, the schools were in great shape and there was a lot of enthusiasm. The staff at Memorial that moved into the portables worked very hard on the last weekend to get their rooms ready and they looked great.

Mr. Currell went to the Lake Beseck bus stop on opening day. He likes to do this every year because there are a lot of children and a great cross section of younger kids.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro said it was a very positive opening. Staff worked around the clock to get the portables completed and ready to open.

Mrs. Viccaro distributed booklets from the State Department of Education entitled "The Condition of Education in Connecticut".

Four District teachers have passed the BEST portfolio. They are Sean Regan, Kim Dixon, Greg Morrone, and Lindsay Lohmeyer.

Mrs. Viccaro read a letter from Commissioner Mark McQuillan congratulating Coginchaug students on performing at the advanced level on all four levels of the 2007 CAPT tests. Fourteen students received the letter.

Mrs. Viccaro reviewed some of the new legal mandates that were passed by the legislature this summer that will have an effect on the District.

- Notice of a formal hearing for an expulsion must now include information on legal services provided free of charge or at a reduced rate that are available locally and how to access such services (effective July 2007)
- Establishment of a division of autism spectrum services within the Department of Mental Retardation (effective June 2007)
- Requirement of each pupil enrolled in school to annually report whether the pupil has health insurance and to provide to the parents of students identified as uninsured information on state sponsored health insurance programs (effective July 2007)
- The timing for required health assessments is changing. (effective July 2008)

- Increasing the length of in-school suspensions from five to ten school days and all suspensions must now be in-school unless the pupil poses a danger to persons or property or is a disruption to the educational process (effective July 2008)
- Renaming the Department of Mental Retardation as the Department of Developmental Services (effective October 2007)

There was some discussion regarding these mandates and the potential costs associated with them. Mrs. Viccaro said a discussion will be held about in-school suspensions at the next consortium meeting of superintendents.

Mrs. Viccaro passed out copies of the Connecticut Secondary School Redesign brochure. It focuses on ways to make sure there is success for all students. Personal educational plans would be developed for each individual student. This is a preliminary document and there is no planned implementation date from the State at this time.

Business Manager's Report: Mr. Melnik said the position for Food Service Manager has been posted on the website and advertised through the Connecticut Dietetic Association.

BASREP has paid in full all back rent and has paid the months of July and August rent for this year. They have asked that an in-kind donation of \$625.79 for a picnic table and plaque be considered by the Board of Education. It will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Mr. Melnik said he will be meeting on September 12th with Steve Meader and Hugh Pearson to complete the final closeout paperwork for the Strong and Coginchaug projects. He will be meeting with our bond counsel, Doug Gillette, regarding how the District can use any remaining funds from the projects.

NESDEC Report: Mr. Hennick said he wanted to discuss how the Board was going to approach the study. He did not want to make any determinations at this time.

Mr. Currlin feels the report was a good analysis but the cost of having choice does not show up in the report.

Mrs. Gara would like to see side-by-side comparisons. She feels it would be more effective to see the items offered in each program listed.

Mrs. Flanagan suggested having three public forums. The first would focus on the content of the report and create a discussion, the second would discuss the recommendations and the third would be to hear how people feel about the options.

Dr. Shoemaker is concerned about having too many meetings, too much input and not enough action.

Mrs. Adams feels that the real costs need to be applied to the programs and to the options.

Mrs. Flanagan feels that it is more than a cost issue; many more points were brought out by the study.

Mr. Hennick feels that conversation with the public is important; the Board can't operate in a vacuum. He feels the forums should be an educational tool, see what the public says and then put the costs on it.

Mrs. Adams feels that although there is a lot of information in the report, without the costs associated with it, the Board won't get anywhere making decisions.

Mr. Currlin said there was not much new in this report that most Board members haven't already heard. He feels looking at the cost is important.

Mrs. Viccaro said attaching the costs is not going to be easy. The busing changes will require redistricting, nothing will be along town lines.

Dr. Shoemaker would like the Board to take the time to look at what they think is best; they have been elected to make the educational decisions. He would like to see what will work and attach a price tag and then involve the public.

Mr. Hennick would like to have at least one public forum to let the people be heard and then the Board can try to come up with a plan.

Dr. Ochterski is concerned about redistricting. He has studied the routes and knows that the neighborhood dividing lines will be difficult for parents to accept.

Mr. Hennick suggested putting together three models, the best educational, neighborhood schools and what the District currently has. A lot more information would be needed to develop these models.

Dr. Shoemaker wants to act now, not wait around for three or four months before acting on the report.

Mr. Hicks agrees that he didn't hear anything new in this report, but a forum will give the chance to hear from more of the public.

Mr. Currlin said the Board will have to consider how a forum will be run.

Mr. Hennick suggested that he put together a time-line and he will bring it to the next meeting.

Mr. Hicks suggested that the whole report document be downloaded as a PDF document onto the website so that everyone coming to a forum will have had a chance to read it in its entirety. Mrs. Viccaro will see about getting it from NESDEC as a WORD document.

Ms. Parsons asked if anyone asked the NESDEC group what option they would choose if they had unlimited funds. That question was not asked.

Oceanography Field Trip Request: On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Dr. Shoemaker the Board of Education unanimously approved a field trip request for the Oceanography class at Coginchaug to Block Island on September 14, 2007.

Buildings & Grounds Committee: Mr. Currlin said the committee met this week. They reviewed a five year list of capital needs by priority. This will be discussed further at the Board retreat. Mr. Melnik will email this list to all members.

The bus depot was discussed. The lease for the current depot is up in two years. Further discussion regarding the DMIAAB location is taking place. A meeting will be held soon to see if this site is feasible.

Further discussion was held regarding the football field lighting. Mr. Currlin reported that Pickett Lane will need to be trenched to put the conduit across the road. They anticipate that it will take four hours to get the job done. Pickett Lane is due for resurfacing soon so they do not feel that it is an issue to cut into the road. The buses will not be restricted on the day of the work. There are no hidden costs and the height of the lights is 24 feet.

Mr. Currlin made a motion, second Mr. Hicks to seek approval from the Planning and Zoning Commission to light the field to the left of the berm on the Pickett Lane campus to be paid for by the Durham Middlefield Falcons Youth Football program.

Ms. Gara questioned if hot or cold patch will be used on the road how the buses will be able to pass. Mr. Currlin said he was told it will not be a problem.

There was much discussion regarding the field use between the soccer program and the football program and how they are affecting the condition of the playing fields for our school programs. This year has been especially difficult on the fields because of the lack of rain.

The Athletic Director, Ted Lombardo, strongly endorses lighting of the field.

Ms. Parson questioned whether the light posts will be far enough away from the side lines to not interfere with either soccer play or football play. Mr. Currlin said they will be 20 feet away from the sideline.

On the motion by Mr. Currlin, second Mr. Hicks the Board of Education unanimously approved the motion to seek approval from the Durham Planning and Zoning Commission to light the field to the left of the berm on the Pickett Lane campus to be paid for by the Durham Middlefield Falcons Youth Football program.

Ms. Gara asked that better coordination of the field use continue to be worked on.

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