

Board of Education

Regional District 13

January 29, 2009

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Thursday, January 29, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the music room at John Lyman School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Currin (arrived at 8:50pm), Mrs. Flanagan, Ms. Gara, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons. Absent: Mrs. Golschneider. Also present: Mr. Melnik, Mrs. Viccaro.

Mr. Hennick called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Next Board Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Education will be held at Brewster Elementary School on February 11, 2009.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second by Ms. Gara, the Board of Education unanimously approved the agenda as amended to include an Executive Session to discuss a draft of the transportation negotiation process.

On a motion by Mrs. Flanagan, second Mrs. Boyle, the Board of Education unanimously approved the minutes to the meeting of January 14, 2009.

Communications: Mr. Hicks said he received several phone calls in reference to the article in the Town Times from the high school student regarding issues with the guidance office. He wants a thorough investigation into what happened and he wants to be sure that this doesn't happen ever again. Several other Board members also received calls regarding the same issue. Mrs. Viccaro said she has been meeting with the guidance office and will talk about it during her Superintendent's Report.

Mrs. Boyle mentioned that she attended the high school holiday concert and that it was a wonderful event.

Mrs. Adams received a call from a parent who is disappointed in the start date for next year's school year. They wanted to know if parents could have input into the calendar through the PTA's before they are finalized. Mrs. Viccaro explained that the development of the calendar is a long process that is first developed in Central Office, reviewed and revised by the administrative council and then approved by the Board of Education. She brings the calendar before the Board at the same meeting every year. Mr. Hennick said the Board welcomes input from the public prior to the approval of the calendar.

Dr. Ochterski attended the Strong School band concert. He is amazed at how much progress they make over the year. He also heard the Pep Band at a Cuginchaug basketball game and they do a wonderful job of keeping the crowd involved.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro distributed a field trip request to Merida and Akumal, Mexico to Board members. This trip would be held during April vacation of 2010. Nancy Alberico, the advisor was present to answer questions. This trip will focus on the Mayan Civilization and an environmental study of sea turtles. Mr. Hennick asked that the agenda be amended before the Board vote on the trip.

On a motion by Mrs. Adams, second Mrs. Boyle, the Board of Education unanimously approved to amend the agenda to include the field trip to Mexico.

On a motion by Mrs. Adams, second Mrs. Boyle, the Board of Education unanimously approved the field trip to Merida and Akumal, Mexico during the April vacation, 2010.

Mr. Hicks reminded Mrs. Alberico that the Board has the right to withdraw permission for the trip should world situations change and warrant it. He strongly recommended students purchase trip insurance.

Mrs. Viccaro distributed a handout to Board members from Lorrie Martin regarding the salt water tank project that Mrs. Martin spoke with the Board about recently. There have been some new developments that need Board approval for her to move forward. Mrs. Martin was present to answer questions of the Board. She has been offered a donation of a salt water reef aquarium, all associated equipment and six tropical fish. She is looking for approval to go after grant money to support the renovations of the room and associated costs for upkeep of the tank. Mrs. Martin said the cost estimates she is presenting may be lower if she is able to secure donations or make some alterations to the plans. These estimates are the highest cost the expenses will be. Mr. Hennick asked Mrs. Martin about the stipend request in her presentation. She said she has been the advisor for the Ocean Bowl Team for the past three years and with the additional work load of the aquarium project she would like to be considered for a stipend. She is still willing to continue with the project if the Board can not afford the stipend this year but she would like them to consider it in the budget process. Mr. Hennick said the agenda needed to be amended to be able to vote.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Flanagan, the Board of Education unanimously amended the agenda to vote on the aquarium project.

On a motion by Mrs. Adams, second Mrs. Flanagan, the Board of Education unanimously approved the proposal from Lorrie Martin to accept the donation of the salt water reef aquarium, associated equipment and fish, contingent on securing the rest of the necessary funding from outside sources.

Mrs. Viccaro discussed the student letter in the Town Times. She said she has investigated and met with many people, including the student who authored the letter. The guidance department has already made a change in how a student requests a transcript by developing a new request form. Naviance, a web-based program is being introduced to juniors next week at a meeting with juniors and their parents. It will track college searches, transcript requests and receipt of information at colleges. It will be monitored on paper and electronically for the first year before going all electronic the following year. Students and their parents will have access to the information. Mrs. Viccaro has also asked for a review of all seniors' files and that has been completed. A master checklist has been created for requests coming into the guidance office. Efforts have been made to assist the student who wrote the article and he is having success getting into colleges.

Mr. Hicks asked that an article be written for the Town Times to encapsulate what has been done in response to the problem. He wants the public to know how it was handled.

Mr. Hennick appreciates the rapid and thorough response that took place.

Mrs. Viccaro said she attended the Inaugural Ball held at Brewster School. The school did a great job and should be commended.

Mrs. Viccaro and Mr. Melnik attended a CAPPS conference on the budget process. She said it was very informative; they met with experts in the field and with many colleagues.

The BKPTA Harlem Wizards games were held last weekend. It was a fundraiser and both games were well attended.

The CRHS Boys' Basketball Family Night is being held tomorrow night. Science Night at Brewster School is on February 5th and the National Honor Society Induction Ceremony is on February 10th.

Food Service: Mark Basil, Director of Food Services, discussed the food service program in the District. His goal since coming to the District last October was to get the participant rate and meal count up. He reviewed a sample of the monthly menus at each of the levels and talked about some of the changes made to the food program. The cafeterias currently have a staff of eighteen; six supervisors and twelve assistants. He is seeing an increase in the average daily counts at all of the schools except Korn. Ron Melnik said he is pleased with the changes he has seen. Many of the items being sold are freshly made and the increase in sales is continuing to go up.

Transportation Advisory Services: Mark Walsh of TAS was asked to review the transportation services for the District. He met this evening with the Transportation Committee to review his report and recommendations and came to the meeting to answer questions of the full Board. Overall, he feels that the District has a high quality program and that DATTCO is very responsive. The contract with DATTCO expires in June 2009. His recommendation is to attempt to negotiate a renewal with DATTCO first with time limitations. If it is not successful then the Board can choose to go out to bid. He said DATTCO's current cost is reasonable and competitive. Mr. Walsh feels that the District should look at the bell times in the schools. There is not enough time between schools for busses to arrive on time and it makes it look like students are on the busses much longer than they really are. He believes the District should consider a two-tier bussing system. It may show a potential overload on some busses so some re-routing would have to occur. He believes negotiations should be started immediately.

Mrs. Flanagan asked why he felt that the District should take over the routing of the busses and how he thought this could be accomplished. Mr. Walsh said it restricts a competitive environment by DATTCO doing the routing. They are determining the number of busses that they need and it gives the appearance of a conflict of interest. He feels the District should have more control. The District could stay with the Trapeze software or look at another program. The consensus of the board was that the report was very informative and thorough.

Board of Education Policy Book: Mrs. Viccaro reported that the cost of joining CABA would be \$3,500 each year for the first two years and then it would cost \$7,000 a year. They would have access to policy information but she thinks there would be an additional charge but she doesn't know how much. Shipman & Goodwin will provide the District with every model policy for \$2,500 or the District can pay an hourly rate for an attorney to go through the policy book with the committee or do it herself. Mr. Hicks said the access to the model policies is important and legal guidance to tell the committee what ones can be eliminated will be helpful. Mr. Hicks would prefer to use the services of Shipman & Goodwin.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mr. Currin the Board of Education unanimously approved to purchase the model policy book from Shipman & Goodwin and to retain the services of their firm at an hourly rate for guidance on policies when necessary.

Finance Committee: Ms. Parson said the Committee met tonight. They reviewed this year's budget. Historical tracking has been difficult because the budgeting format has changed. New spreadsheets will be given to all Board members. The expenditures are where they thought they would be. She will be asking the Board to make transfers between accounts earlier in the year this year. She reported that the District has received a grant from the state to offset the high cost of fuel oil.

The financial audit for the year ending June 30, 2008 has been received and reviewed by the committee. They made some recommendations that the District will be implementing.

On a motion by Ms. Parsons, second Mrs. Flanagan, the Board of Education unanimously approved to accept the Audit Report completed by Blum Shapiro for the year ending June 30, 2008.

Building/Transportation Committee: Mr. Hennick reported that the Committee met this evening to review the report from Transportation Advisory Services with Mark Walsh. The sub-committee approved a motion to endorse the idea of negotiating with DATTCO. The Committee would like Mr. Walsh to lead the negotiations.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mr. Currlin the Board of Education unanimously approved to retain the services of Mark Walsh of Transportation Advisory Services to negotiate on behalf of the Board directly with DATTCO and if not fruitful by the end of February begin to develop a bid package to request quotes for a five-year bus contract beginning July 1, 2009.

Curriculum Committee: Mr. Hicks said the Committee met last week and reviewed the new language arts curriculum. It will get discussed further at the next meeting.

Building Committee: Mr. Currlin said the Building Committees have not met but a meeting was held with the Durham P & Z and one is being scheduled with the Middlefield P & Z. The plans for the reading rooms at Korn and CRHS have been approved. The reading rooms are being built at no expense to the District. The bid packages are being developed. A meeting was held today with a company called QBS. They are helping to put together the RFQ for Architect and Engineering services. Mr. Currlin said a report came out yesterday on athletic turf and he said he expects that we will have all of the answers we need to proceed.

Mrs. Boyle asked about the timeline for the projects. Interim financing will be used to get started and the bonding will be in place after July 1st. They are hopeful that the fields will be useable for the spring season. Interest rates are more favorable than estimated and costs should be coming in less than projected. Mr. Melnik does not expect to have a difficult time selling the bond.

On a motion by Mrs. Flanagan, second Mrs. Adams the Board of Education moved into Executive Session to discuss a draft of the transportation negotiation process.

The Board moved into open session.

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