

Board of Education

Regional District 13

February 25, 2009

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, February 25, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the library at Memorial Middle School. Board members present: Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Currin, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons. Absent: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Flanagan, Ms. Gara.
Also present: Mrs. Viccaro.

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

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Next Board Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Education will be held at Strong Middle School on March 4, 2009.

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

On a motion by Mrs. Golschneider, second Mr. Currin, the minutes were unanimously approved as corrected.

Communications: Mr. Hicks received a letter from Stacy Markoski, the mother of the student who wrote the letter to the Town Times regarding the guidance department. She thanked him for his concern regarding the issue. He also spoke with her on the phone and invited her to attend tonight's presentation.

Mrs. Viccaro said she received a phone message from a parent regarding her letter in the Town Times this past week. The parent has an eighth-grade student and was having "a crisis of confidence" in regards to sending her child to Cogenchaug but now knows that things are being addressed. Mrs. Viccaro also received a letter from Mrs. Markoski, thanking her for talking directly with her and with her son, and stated that she knows that things will work out for her son.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro reported that the School Security Grant that the District received has been taken away by the state. Mrs. Viccaro received an email last week that the Governor has revoked the grants. Mrs. Viccaro has talked with our State Representatives regarding the grant money and they are investigating. They understand that timing is an issue because this money was required to be spent by June 30, 2009. The District has the money to do the work in the capital fund if we chose to move forward with it.

Mrs. Boyle questioned how the Governor can take the grant money when it comes from Homeland Security and that is a federal program. Mrs. Viccaro said that is a question that she has asked of the representatives but has not received an answer yet.

Mrs. Viccaro also received an email today that the State Legislature is considering taking \$8,000,000 from special education funding from the current year's budget. She does not know yet how this will affect District 13. The Legislature knows that the federal stimulus money will be sending school districts money for special education so they feel they can cut the State funding. Mrs. Viccaro is encouraged by the responses she has had from Senator Gaffey, Representative Lesser, and Senator Meyer's offices. Mrs. Viccaro explained that special education funding comes from the excess cost formula per student and is very unique for each school district.

Mrs. Viccaro reported on the information requested by the Board regarding the selection for the National Youth Science Camp. Mrs. Michael said the science department selects five top students and asks them if they would be interested in applying. If they choose to follow-up,

the application includes an essay and letters of recommendation. Two students from each state are selected from the Department of Education. It is a four-week program in July and besides the cost of travel to the camp it is totally free to the student.

Mrs. Viccaro read a letter from Patty Douglass, Chair of Project Graduation. They have a new fundraising idea; a "tree" secured to a wall in Coginchaug and people would purchase a leaf on the tree. They hope to be able to move forward with the idea this year because fundraising has been down. It was decided that Bill Currlin will contact Mrs. Douglass to schedule a meeting of the Building & Grounds Committee to meet with them to get more information about the project.

Mrs. Viccaro distributed a copy of an article on the proposal to expand teacher training and certification. Special education coursework will significantly increase. These changes would be at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Mr. Currlin asked about the status of the BEST program. Mrs. Viccaro explained that the new program has eliminated the video component for year-two teachers. The overall requirements are now minimal. Mrs. Viccaro said in the past teachers were held to high standards in Connecticut and the District has been able to hire great teachers that have all passed the BEST program. Dr. Ochterski is in the BEST program now and said the grading of the portfolio is either considered complete or incomplete. He and his colleagues in the program feel that this type of grading does not promote their best effort.

Mrs. Viccaro distributed a copy of the current course schedule at Coginchaug. She explained the schedule and encouraged members to email her if they have any specific questions.

Mrs. Viccaro distributed a handout to members on a new on-line procurement program that the District will be participating in. District 17 Superintendent, Gary Mala, brought forward Public Act 08-141 that now makes it legal for municipalities, local and regional school districts to join together to bid for items through reverse auction technology. The Middlesex Superintendent's Association has voted to move forward with this and is looking for others to join in. Through LEARN the District will be participating in on-line auctions for technology equipment and for cleaning supplies. The first auction will take place this spring. Mr. Melnik, Mr. Francis, and Mr. Fielding have identified what they wanted for the District. There is a fee to participate in the auction but it will be shared by all of the districts involved. Mrs. Viccaro will email members what the cost of the fee was for the auction that District 17 participated in.

Mrs. Viccaro reported that the District raised \$753.00 for the United Way on "Live United Day".

This past Monday, Mrs. Viccaro met with representatives of 5 out of 6 of the District bargaining groups. She talked with them about her concerns for the budget year and the anticipated health insurance increases. She asked that they share the information with their membership. She felt that it was a productive meeting.

Yesterday, Mrs. Viccaro attended the Durham Middlefield Youth and Family Services rollout of the asset survey from 2007. She was disappointed in the turnout. This survey was a United Way survey that took place in all communities except one in the area. It was to assess how kids (grades 7-12) look at their world. The information is pretty accurate. Even though the turnout was not great, Mrs. Viccaro said the breakout group she met in had some great ideas and she is sure others did as well.

Mrs. Viccaro told the Board that the new fish tank at Coginchaug is complete and it is unbelievable. The entire project happened over the vacation week. It is a stunning 150 gallon salt water tank with 6 beautiful fish. The kids and staff love it and were shocked to find it

there when they returned from vacation. She thanked Lorrie Martin for her dedication to the project and for the incredible amount of time and effort she put in over the last week.

Business Manager's Report: Mr. Hicks explained that several resolutions needed to be approved to move forward with the projects on the roofs and the wells.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mr. Currlin, the Board of Education unanimously resolved, that the Board of Education authorizes Regional School District 13 to apply to the Commissioner of Education and to accept or reject a grant for the water system replacement at Memorial School.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mr. Currlin, the Board of Education unanimously resolved, that the Board of Education hereby authorizes at least the preparation of schematic drawings and outline specifications for the water system replacement at Memorial School.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mr. Currlin, the Board of Education unanimously resolved, that the Board of Education authorizes Regional School District 13 to apply to the Commissioner of Education and to accept or reject a grant for the water system replacement at John Lyman School.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mr. Currlin, the Board of Education unanimously resolved, that the Board of Education hereby authorizes at least the preparation of schematic drawings and outline specifications for the water system replacement at John Lyman School.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Ms. Parsons, the Board of Education unanimously resolved, that the Board of Education authorizes Regional School District 13 to apply to the Commissioner of Education and to accept or reject a grant for the water system replacement at Brewster School.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mr. Currlin, the Board of Education unanimously resolved, that the Board of Education hereby authorizes at least the preparation of schematic drawings and outline specifications for the water system replacement at Brewster School.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mr. Currlin, the Board of Education unanimously resolved, that the Board of Education authorizes Regional School District 13 to apply to the Commissioner of Education and to accept or reject a grant for the roof replacement at Memorial School.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mr. Currlin, the Board of Education unanimously resolved, that the Board of Education hereby authorizes at least the preparation of schematic drawings and outline specifications for the roof replacement at Memorial School.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mr. Currlin, the Board of Education unanimously resolved, that the Board of Education authorizes Regional School District 13 to apply to the Commissioner of Education and to accept or reject a grant for the roof replacement at John Lyman School.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mr. Currlin, the Board of Education unanimously resolved, that the Board of Education hereby authorizes at least the preparation of schematic drawings and outline specifications for the roof replacement at John Lyman School.

Guidance Department – Naviance: The CRHS Guidance Department staff; Beth Galligan, Beth Kendall and Lynn Williams presented on the new computer program, Naviance, a college search and planning program that they have begun using at Coginchaug. This program was introduced to juniors and their parents at an information night held recently. Through this

program the Guidance Office can track student and parent usage. In 2009-2010 they will be able to begin tracking transcript requests and confirm that materials have been sent. Each counselor will monitor their own students. Starting next year they will also use Edudoc to electronically send documents to colleges. For the first year they will also send paper copies of all documents. Freshmen and sophomores will be introduced to the program and they will begin resume writing by listing their accomplishments. These can be updated throughout their high school career. At Strong School they will also begin using a form of the program that sets up student accounts, tracks their interests and can help them in their high school course selection process. As students begin their college search they can search for potential schools by areas of interest, location, size, area, etc. Cuginchaug will begin to develop a database of where students have applied, where they got accepted and where they attend.

Jennifer Emory, Amy Emory's daughter, a senior at Portland High School was present to show Board members an actual student account as Portland High has been using this program for a year. She took them through her site and talked about how it has worked for her during her college search process. Mrs. Emory said that as a parent it has been very easy to navigate the site. Parents only have viewing privileges on the site; they cannot alter what the students have selected.

Mr. Currlin asked if there are plans to assess if the program is working. Mrs. Viccaro said she would like to survey parents and students about their ease with using the system. Ms. Galligan said the program has several surveys and she is sure one would work for that purpose.

Mr. Hennick would like the Guidance Department to track the program for a year and then report back to the Board on how it is working.

There were no committee reports.

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