

Board of Education

Regional District 13

March 18, 2009

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, March 18, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the library at Strong School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, and Ms. Parsons. Absent: Mr. Currin, Ms. Gara, and Mrs. Golschneider.

Also present: Mr. Melnik, Mrs. Viccaro.

Mr. Hennick called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

Public Comment:

Josh Stockdale of Durham reiterated what he said at last week's meeting regarding class size at Memorial and added that the benefit to add a teacher outweighs the cost. Mr. Stockdale said that the average assessed value of a home in Durham is \$192,000 and using that figure the average tax increase with the budget presented would be \$93 per year and if you add a teacher it would only increase that figure by less than \$6.

Donia Viola of Durham stated that she would like to see the administrators put aside their raises. Mrs. Viola said that it is not the number of students in a class but rather the teacher who determines how a class will perform. She said the ID program is more costly than the Contemporary Program and that the Board needs to be more fiscally responsible.

Vicky Climie of Durham would still like the Board to look at ways to cut salaries and benefits rather than positions.

Teresa Opalacz and Lucy Meigs would both like to have a teacher added to the 5th grade ID program at Memorial and not cut the .4 teacher at the High School. Several parents also spoke in favor of small class sizes at all levels.

Jeremy Renninghoff of Middlefield wanted an explanation regarding the audit and the surplus in the fund balance. Mr. Renninghoff also stated if enrollment is expected to decrease by 100 students over the next 5 years why would we need to hire more teachers.

Karen Meiman would like to maintain the staffing at the High School. Mrs. Meiman stated that there will be an increase of 18 students to the population at the High School for the 2009-2010 school year and that we should be asking for an increase in teachers not a decrease.

Next Board Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Education will be held at Strong School on March 25, 2009.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second by Mrs. Flanagan, the agenda was unanimously approved as amended to include a legal matter under executive session.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, second by Mrs. Adams the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the meeting of March 11, 2009.

Communications: There were no communications.

Superintendent's Report:

Mrs. Viccaro attended the Renaissance Feast at Coginchaug Regional High School Friday, March 13, 2009. She said the food was great and a good time was had by all.

Mrs. Viccaro said that Coginchaug held its Semi-Formal Dance at Memorial Middle School on Saturday night, March 14, 2009.

Mrs. Viccaro spoke with Craig Edmonson of ACES this week regarding the Thomas Edison Magnet School enrollment. She said that after a long conversation with Mr. Edmonson, she feels that the Board needs to think about either carrying the slots already held by the District or lowering the number of students the District can send.

Mrs. Viccaro discussed the Brewster/Korn/Lyman enrollment. She handed out information regarding past, current and projected enrollment at the elementary schools. She said that historically enrollment has flip flopped back and forth from the ID program and the Contemporary program. Mrs. Viccaro said that when a class size is reached in one program that program is closed and the program that still has space is then filled. She said that the projections for next year's incoming Kindergarten class are lower than they have been in past years.

2009-2010 Regional School District 13 Budget: Mr. Hennick asked the Board if they received any calls or emails regarding the budget from members of the community.

Dr. Ochterski said he received one call regarding class size at Memorial.

Mrs. Adams said she received both emails and phone calls. Most were regarding the class size at Memorial and one was regarding the Guidance Department at Coginchaug.

Mrs. Flanagan and Mr. Hennick said they both heard from parents who suggested that the staff take concessions on their pay rather than cut positions.

Mrs. Viccaro said that she has had 2 meetings with representatives of all the bargaining units and let them know that they will likely see staffing cuts with this budget. Mr. Hennick asked Mrs. Viccaro if after these 2 meetings she felt they would be willing to give any concessions. Mrs. Viccaro said it was hard to say, but didn't think they were willing to at that time.

Mr. Hicks said he received both calls and emails regarding class size at Memorial.

Ms. Parsons said she received one call in favor of adding the 5th grade ID teacher at Memorial.

Mrs. Boyle said she also received one call in favor of adding the 5th grade ID teacher at Memorial. She also said she received a call regarding the Guidance Department at Coginchaug.

Mrs. Viccaro relayed information provided by the principals at Strong, Memorial and Coginchaug regarding student participation in both athletic and academic activities. She found that most of the activities provided by the District had a great participation rate. Mrs. Viccaro also stated that there are several activities where no stipend is involved.

At the last meeting the Board wanted to know what percentage of parents in the District received information via email. Mrs. Viccaro reported they are as follows: Brewster 30%; Korn 50%; Lyman 50%; Coginchaug 65%; Memorial 77%; and Strong 99% to 100%.

Mr. Melnik researched the number of hours that the late bus was being used at Memorial and it was actually only being used 2 days per week and only runs from October to May. With this new information, Mr. Melnik said they were able to decrease the budget by \$4,043.00.

Mr. Melnik responded to Mr. Renninghoff's statement regarding the surplus in the fund balance. Mr. Melnik stated the amount of the fund balance is a timing issue and that it is carried over from the previous year to the next year's budget. Ms. Parsons agreed with Mr. Melnik and stated that it is a rolling balance.

Mrs. Viccaro responded to Mrs. Meiman's question regarding the increase in the population at Coginchaug for the 2009-2010 school year. She stated that of the 185 8th grade students currently in the District there will be a low of 140 to a high of 153 that will be attending Coginchaug next year. Mrs. Viccaro stated that currently the student population at the High School is 563 and next year's student population will be anywhere between 578 and 591.

Mr. Hennick suggested sending a letter to the 4th grade ID parents asking if anyone would be interested in switching their child from the 5th grade ID program to the Contemporary program. He stated that until we get the response from these parents the Board would table the discussion of class size at Memorial until the next Board meeting. The Board agreed to this.

The Board discussed and then agreed to go ahead and make the first round of cuts to the budget with the addition of the following: Late Bus-Memorial (\$4,043); Wise mentors (\$636); Bus Monitors (\$28,789); and Various stipends (\$12,076) bringing the total cut from the budget to \$141,919.00.

Mrs. Viccaro said that the Security Grant money was back. She said that she was not sure if it would be taken away again, but that she would be proceeding with everything as if it would not be.

Mrs. Viccaro and Mr. Melnik attended a Superintendent and Business Manager meeting in Hartford on Tuesday, March 17, 2009 to discuss the stimulus money. Mark McQuillan, Commissioner of Education for the State of Connecticut said that preliminary amount of funds that District 13 is expected to receive is \$400,000.00 over a 2 year period. Mrs. Viccaro stressed that these funds were not set and that they could change at any time. She said that these funds cannot be used to supplant what is already in our budget. She said that the Commissioner said the funds should be used for activities that can be sustainable like professional development. Commissioner McQuillan stated that guidelines would be sent out to the Special Education Directors. Ms. Parsons asked if the funds could be used to bring in a 2nd reading consultant. Mrs. Viccaro said she did not know the answer to that. She said that the funds will be coming through as IDEA money and that Amy Emory, Pupil Personal Director, will be putting together a grant that must be in by April 15, 2009.

Committee Reports:

Personnel Policy Committee:

Mrs. Flanagan said that they are in negotiations with the Support Staff, Cafeteria Staff and Custodial Staff and they are currently in mediation with one bargaining unit.

Building/Grounds & Transportation Committee:

Dr. Ochterski said the committee met Tuesday, March 17, 2009 and put together a counter proposal to DATTCO. He said that DATTCO needs to respond to the counter proposal by Friday, March 20, 2009 or they will go out to bid.

Policy Development Committee:

Mr. Hicks said the Policy Committee met tonight. Gwen Zittoun of Shipman & Goodwin is going to review the Policy Book and make suggestions on what policies should be deleted and what policies should be added. The District is going to contact Mark Walsh and have him review the Transportation Policy. The Committee received input from the Nurses regarding a Food Allergy Policy. Mr. Hicks said that there is currently no policy regarding grants and that he would draft language to implement a policy on grant writing procedures. Mr. Hicks said that eventually the Policy Book will be available on CD.

On a motion by Mrs. Flanagan, second Mrs. Adams the Board of Education moved into Executive Session to discuss Teacher Non-renewals, the DATTCO contract proposals and a legal issue.

They moved back into regular session.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Flanagan the Board of Education unanimously moved that the contract of employment of Melissa Roy, Kim Stockdale, Jeffrey Bernabeo, Maura Caramanello, Lori Koladicz, Matthew Thompson, Rachel Mann, Cassandra Montepara, JoAnn Pantalena, Jessica Biancardi, and Elise Bohner not be renewed for the following year upon its expiration at the end of the 2008-2009 school year, and that the Superintendent of Schools is directed to advise such person(s) in writing of this action.

On a motion by Mrs. Boyle, second Ms. Parsons the Board of Education unanimously moved to join the class action suit against Turriss Associates.

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