

Board of Education

REVISED Regional District 13

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, March 10, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. in the library at Strong Middle School. Board members present: Mr. Currlin, Mrs. Flanagan, Ms. Gara, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hennick, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons. Members absent: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Hicks. Also present: Mr. Melnik, Mrs. Viccaro.

Mr. Hennick called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m.

Public Comment: Jeremy Renninghoff, Middlefield Board of Finance member said the enrollment is declining rapidly at the elementary level and he doesn't know how the Board can justify keeping all the staffing at those schools. He suggested reorganizing and redeploying staff to other buildings where they may be needed more. He is also concerned that as enrollment decreases spending still continues to increase. He said the per pupil expenditure for District 13 students is above the State average.

Donia Viola feels that the District is trying to play catch-up on infrastructure maintenance. She does not feel this is the time to fund capital expenditures and that many things can be put on hold until the economy recovers. Regarding class sizes, Mrs. Viola feels that students in the upper level classes at the high school should be able to handle larger classes. They should be self motivated and will be better able to handle larger classes in college.

Rick Hanley of Durham said that his son was in one of the larger algebra classes at Coginchaug. He is concerned about the comments made that teachers are babysitting the students. His son had to be pulled out of the class due to the large size. Mr. Hanley feels the budget increase is within reason and is in-line with inflation. He does not want to delay capital projects.

Mr. Hennick reminded the public that the first hour of the Board meeting on March 17<sup>th</sup> will be dedicated to public comment on the budget.

Next Board Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Education will be held at Strong School on March 17, 2010.

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

On a motion by Mrs. Flanagan, second Dr. Ochterski, the minutes to the meeting of March 3, 2010 were unanimously approved.

Communications: Mrs. Golschneider attended Brewster Loves to Read Night and later in the week she also read at Korn School. She said it was a great time at both schools.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro said the local Chamber of Commerce meeting was hosted at Strong School this morning. She said the meeting was well attended and thanked Scott Nicol and Michael Klimas for the use of the school library.

Mrs. Viccaro also attended the Brewster Loves to Read Night. She enjoys the event each year and said it is very well attended.

Mrs. Viccaro said the CRHS Semi-Formal Dance was held last weekend at Memorial School. It was a successful and well attended event.

She met this week with the parent groups at Memorial, Lyman and Brewster/Korn and will be meeting in the near future with the Strong and CRHS parent groups to discuss the school budget.

A high school principal search committee is being formed. Many people have shown interest in being on the committee. Mrs. Viccaro will finalize the group by next week. She intends to conduct interviews during the month of April and hopes to bring a final candidate to the Board in May.

CRHS Music Field Trip Request: On a motion by Mr. Currin, second Ms. Gara, the Board of Education unanimously approved the field trip request to the New England Music Festival in Burlington, CT from March 18-20, 2010.

2010-11 Regional District 13 Budget: Mrs. Viccaro distributed a handout on enrollment, showing class size projections for the 2010-11 school year at all of the schools.

Mr. Hennick asked what savings would be seen if the Board considered cutting a teaching position. Mrs. Viccaro said an estimate of salary and benefits for one teaching position would be \$65,000.

Mrs. Viccaro said she was very purposeful in not cutting any teaching positions in this budget. The District lost a lot of teachers last year.

Mr. Hennick asked for someone to talk about why the kindergarten classes need to be small. Mrs. Heckler explained that the State expectation for kindergarteners is for them to be reading by the end of their kindergarten year. In our half day program it is very difficult to try to achieve this while trying to fit in all of the other skills they need to learn. If the time to teach the students isn't going to change then a smaller class is very important.

Mrs. Viccaro distributed a handout showing student participation rates in the high school athletic teams. She also passed out a spreadsheet showing the cost of all the high school athletic teams showing the coaching stipends, transportation fees, supplies and cost of officials. She felt it was important for the Board to have this information available before they discuss any changes to sports.

Stephen Augeri, of the Falcons Football League, said their program has grown steadily over the last several years. It has 2<sup>nd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade children involved in it. In the 1<sup>st</sup> year 95 students participated, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year -150, 3<sup>rd</sup> year-175 and in the 4<sup>th</sup> year-210.

Ms. Gara asked if there has been any discussion with the booster group about helping to offset the start-up costs for football. Mrs. Viccaro said the group is still in the process of separating from the V/C Hawks and she doesn't think we can count on them yet. Ms. Gara also asked if we have considered basing activity fees directly related to the cost of the sport.

Mrs. Flanagan said the District has gotten a great deal from Vinal for football for the last few years. The budget shows a disproportionate cost for football; for the number of kids participating the cost may not be that high. All of the start-up supplies are in this year's budget so it is not a normal budget year for football. Mrs. Flanagan agreed with Ms. Gara that a closer look at the fees needs to be taken.

Mr. Hennick asked Mrs. Viccaro and Mr. Melnik to gather information on what other districts across the state are charging in regards to activity fees and pay to play.

Mr. Hennick asked Board members to share their questions regarding the budget.

Mrs. Golschneider asked about the cost of postage and asked what percentage of parents are receiving information by email. Although it has continued to increase in all of the schools she would still like to see it higher at the elementary schools. The elementary principals said parents of many of the younger students still like to receive paper copies of the notices.

Mrs. Golschneider asked what happened to the reverse auction for supplies. Mr. Melnik said it didn't work out for the technology purchases because we use mostly Macs in the schools. For electricity we went with a consortium instead and have seen considerable savings. We have not yet pursued the janitorial supplies and we were already under a bid contract for our office supplies. We will go out to bid for office and school supplies this April.

Mrs. Golschneider is also concerned about the costs of shipping and handling and asked if orders are ever combined to save on the cost. The principals said they try to use vendors that do not charge for shipping and handling whenever possible and combine orders whenever they can.

Mrs. Golschneider asked why Memorial School uses more oil and has less square footage than some of the other buildings. Mr. Melnik did not have an answer but said he would speak with Mr. Francis about it.

Mrs. Golschneider is concerned about the amount of custodial overtime. Mrs. Viccaro explained that much of it is to cover for evening events and weekend activities. The District is reimbursed for the overtime charges from outside organizations.

Mr. Melnik said that of the \$84,000 budgeted for custodial overtime; approximately \$22,000 was billed back to organizations.

Mrs. Flanagan asked if we could add someone to the schedule to cover for events when we know we will be using them. It is paying the overtime rate that costs the District so much.

Mrs. Golschneider asked for a clarification of the role of the interns. Mrs. Viccaro explained that we have contracted with the University of New Haven for students in their graduate education program. The interns are assigned to one building for the year to work as a substitute. They are a consistent presence in the building and if they are not being used as a sub they are trained to work with struggling students. Principals said they also get involved in after school activities and clubs. Mr. Melnik said the amount for interns was decreased in last year's budget. The requested amount is for the number of interns that was originally requested last year.

For next week Mrs. Golschneider would like more information on how iPods are going to be used in the language labs. She also wants to know if all of the sports teams that are requesting new uniforms really need them this year or if any of them can be put off for another year.

Ms. Gara asked for a clarification about the stipend money for coaches. They all appear to be new positions and she knows they are not. Mr. Melnik said the accounts were separated this year so it appears as if there was no money in the account before but they used to be all in one account. He will get a list so the actuals from last year can be compared.

Ms. Gara asked what the actual expenditures were for legal expenses last year. She also wants to know what percentage the fund balance can be reduced to before it will hurt the District's bond rating. Mr. Melnik will get that information for the next meeting.

Ms. Gara asked why we haven't been able to reduce the cost for technology services since we hired a technology director. It was her understanding that some of these expenses would be reduced. She asked if it would be possible to have students volunteer for the tech coverage in the auditorium as a community service commitment instead of paying them. Mrs. Viccaro said we need to have consistency; if they kids are volunteering they won't always show up.

Ms. Gara asked for an explanation of the consortium. Mrs. Viccaro said the consortium is made up of Portland, Middletown, East Hampton, Cromwell and District 13. Meetings are held with the superintendents and principals from the area. The consortium director helps to organize many events that all of the districts participate in. Each district is assessed \$9,000 for their participation. She feels it is money well spent.

Dr. Ochterski asked how Naviance is being used at Strong School. Mrs. Viccaro said it is used for career exploration. There is a model specifically for middle schools.

Mrs. Flanagan questioned the increase in magnet school tuition at Coginchaug. Dr. Wysowski said this was a change from part-time to full-time status.

Mrs. Flanagan would also like to look more carefully at the amounts allocated for the purchasing of uniforms. As an example, she said the amount is the same for boys and girls tennis and the number of students participating is very different.

Mrs. Flanagan said this budget is very difficult to make cuts from. The increase in salaries and benefits totals \$1.2 million and without those two items this budget is flat.

The Board is looking for more feedback from the public regarding the budget and would like emails or phone calls between this meeting and the next meeting.

Finance Committee: Ms. Parsons said the Committee met this evening. Expenses are tracking as expected; spending is under last year and revenues are coming in as estimated. The Committee met again with the Merrill Lynch representative about merging the two pension funds. It was decided that the money will be split between 65% equity funds and 35% bond funds. Fund managers were selected. If the Committee decides that they are not comfortable with any of the selections they have made they can make changes without any additional fees.

On a motion by Ms. Parson, second Mr. Currin, the following funds were unanimously approved by the Board of Education for investment of the pension fund: Allianz VI (20%), Natixis- AMA VI (15%), Allianz II (15%), ING II (20%), MFS VI (15%), and Parametric MF CDP VI (15%).

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