

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 Strong Middle School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currlin, Mrs. Flanagan, Ms. Gara, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Dr. Shoemaker. Also present: Mr. Melnik, Mrs. Viccaro.

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

Public Comment: Raffiella Franc, Scott Geness and Tim Mack, all parents of children in the Chauker Road, Shunpike Road area spoke before the Board to request that busses be allowed to go down Shunpike Road. In the past Shunpike Road was not paved and the parents were told that busses could not travel down the road. These parents have worked with the town to get the road paved and now they have been told that busses will still not be coming into their area. They believe Shunpike Road is now safe and a logical route for the busses to take. They do not feel that the walking parameters of the Board policy apply in this day and age and should be reviewed again.

Mr. Hennick said the Transportation Committee would review; no decisions will be made tonight.

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

Dr. Shoemaker made a motion, second Mrs. Adams to approve the minutes of the meeting of July 5, 2007. Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currlin, Mrs. Flanagan, Ms. Gara, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hennick, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Dr. Shoemaker voted yes. Mr. Hicks abstained.

Communication: Mr. Hicks attended the new staff luncheon today. He said the District is hiring a very diverse group and he thinks people will be very pleased with the caliber of people. Many were already employed by the District.

Mr. Hennick also attended the luncheon. He was impressed with the people that are choosing to come back to work in the District again after leaving. Mr. Hennick also mentioned that a meeting was held yesterday with the selectman of the towns, continuing the tradition of the monthly meeting with them. He said it was a productive meeting.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro also commented on the new staff meeting held today. She said the administrators have worked hard to hire high quality people. By the end of the day she thought that the new staff felt very comfortable with their decision to work for District 13.

Mrs. Viccaro attended a meeting of Superintendents with the new Commissioner of Education. He has reorganized much of the Department of Education; there are many people leaving and many changes. She feels he understands education; he wants to reach out to urban and regional superintendents.

At the meeting with the selectmen a potential grant from the state for security was discussed. Five million dollars is being earmarked for schools that have minimal security measures in place. Funding will be between 20% and 80%.

Mrs. Viccaro said the summer school program was very successful. She thanked Carol Luckenbach, Amy Emory and Eida Hinson-Yokubinas for their work and organization of the program.

Mrs. Viccaro said the math and science camp held at Strong School was very well attended.

Mrs. Viccaro said students from Memorial and Strong schools attended a program called Cultural Arts for Understanding, held at Weaver High School this summer. This program was sponsored through the consortium. The students had a chance to work with many artists and performed numbers from the Lion King and then went to New York City to see the production of Lion King on Broadway.

There are still a few positions in the District that have not been filled; .4 Latin at Coginchaug, 2 teacher assistant positions, and one ABA position are still open. Mrs. Viccaro is confident that the assistant positions will be filled before school opens. There was also a resignation of a special education teacher this past week, but she intends to hold the teacher to her contract for thirty days.

The automation of the middle school libraries is ready to go, but not yet on board.

Business Manager's Report: Mr. Melnik reported that so far the bus calls appear to be less than in the past summers. The routes are posted on the Internet, linking through our website, and this appears to be helping to cut down on the calls.

The audit is ongoing. It appears to be going well, with an October timeline projected.

Mr. Melnik said the ED001; the finance report due to the State is being completed and will be submitted on time. By next year he would like to automate more of the functions to make the information more accessible to him.

The upgrade of the office financial systems is complete. Payroll went live on July 1st with a few small glitches and accounts payable is now also on board. The transition went very well.

Mr. Melnik is in the process of looking for a new Director of Food Services. Tom McDowell has left the District. Mr. Melnik is working with a consultant recommended by the State to get the food service department off the ground for the school year. He is looking to make some changes in the cafeterias.

The portables are in, thanks to Jim Croteau and Rob Francis and the buildings are in great shape for the opening of school.

Summer Activities: Mrs. Viccaro also commented on the portables. She said the teachers who haven't been able to get into their classrooms have been nervous, but they should be able to get in tomorrow. The buildings will be opened on the weekend if necessary. On Monday, Mrs. Viccaro, Mr. Melnik, and Mr. Francis will travel to all the buildings to review the final work completed.

Board Meeting Dates in September/October: Mr. Hennick explained to Board members that meeting dates in September and the first meeting in October were changed on the schedule that was mailed to them due to various conflicts.

On a motion by Mrs. Adams, second Dr. Shoemaker the Board of Education unanimously approved the schedule of Board meetings for the 2007-2008 school year as presented.

Board Retreat: The Board Retreat has been scheduled for October 28th. Mr. Hennick asked every member to think of a topic they would like to discuss. Mrs. Viccaro suggested that any questions be emailed to her or Mr. Melnik prior to the meeting so they will have a chance to gather data or do research ahead of time.

NESDEC Report: Mrs. Viccaro distributed copies of the report to the members. She said there is a lot to read and digest. Mr. Hennick said he has read the document and wants the Board to look at it in a rational manner and to think about how they are going to proceed. The Board needs a plan of how to present and talk about the report. Copies of the document are going to be distributed to all the schools, the Town Halls, and the libraries tomorrow. It was suggested that the executive summary be put on the District website.

Public Communication: Mr. Hennick discussed the idea of having Board members available to the public prior to the start of Board meetings. He has seen this done in other towns and would like to try it here; he feels this will give an opportunity to people who are not comfortable speaking before an audience. After much discussion it was decided to schedule two Board members to come one-half hour early on the second meeting of each month from now through December. Other members are welcome to attend early if they choose. Rosemary Allen will develop a schedule and it will get posted on the website. It was suggested that during budget meetings in March members should be available every meeting and possibly after the meetings as well. This will get decided at a later date. The discussions held during this informal time will get reported during the communications section of the Board meeting.

BASREP: Ms. Parsons said she, Mrs. Flanagan, and Mr. Melnik met with representatives of BASREP in July. BASREP believes there was a misunderstanding regarding repayment and they have changed their point of view. Their plan is to pay up all back rent by September 1st. They have agreed to make the same rent payments for this school year but they would like the District to consider negotiating a lower rent for next year. The Finance Committee will discuss this during their meeting.

Mr. Melnik distributed a balance sheet showing exactly what BASREP still owes for the 06-07 School Year along with copies of the letter written in March asking to be released from the balance they owed on rent for this school year and a copy of a note sent recently saying they would be paid up by the 1st week in September.

Building and Grounds Committee: Mr. Currllin said they met last night. He will continue to report on any final activity of the closeout of the building projects as the Building Committee has disbanded. Final reports have been submitted to the State for the Brewster and Korn projects; the audit will happen about six months after the State accepts the records. Mr. Melnik will be meeting with Mr. Meader and Mr. Pearson to work on the final reports for the Strong and Cuginchaug projects within the next couple of weeks.

As the State is discussing the implementation of all day kindergarten in the near future, a discussion was also held regarding beginning a needs assessment study very soon.

Mr. Currllin said the Falcons Football program would like to put up light towers for practice near the field they use across from Allyn Brook Park. They would be installed at their cost, facing onto the field.

Mr. Currllin made a motion to approve the request from the Falcons Football program to allow lighting to be installed by the football field; Mr. Hicks seconded the request.

Dr. Shoemaker questioned who would pay the utility costs. Mr. Melnik said the district will. They are upgrading the service and we will own it once it is installed. It has to go to Planning and Zoning for approval. The power will also be used to supply the scoreboard at the boys' baseball field that now is run by a generator.

Ms. Gara asked whether the soccer club has been asked if they want to coordinate with this project. These lights are really not that high, only 30 feet. They are not intended to be for games, just for practices.

Mrs. Golschneider questioned whether the road would have to be cut up to bring the power across. She is concerned that the road will break-up once it is cut.

Mrs. Adams questioned how long the work would take and if it will interfere with busses on Pickett Lane.

The Board wants answers to their questions before they are comfortable voting on this.

Mr. Hicks withdrew his second, Mr. Currlin withdrew the motion on the floor.

Mr. Currlin said the Building and Grounds Committee also reviewed the five-year capital plan. The next meeting of the Building and Grounds Committee will be used to prioritize capital improvements.

Long Range Planning Committee: Mrs. Flanagan said the committee agreed that the first focus would be on capital improvements. They discussed a long-range capital plan in terms of funding. It is clear that it will not be able to come from the annual budgets.

Personnel Policy Committee: Mrs. Flanagan said they are starting up again; the first meeting is on September 19th with the Boards of Finance from the towns to discuss teacher negotiations. Mrs. Flanagan plans to meet personally with the 1st Selectmen to encourage participation of the Boards of Finance members in the process.

Mr. Currlin congratulated Dr. Ochterski on his new profession as a chemistry teacher at East Hampton High School.

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