

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, November 28, 2007 at 7:30 p.m. in the media center 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 7:33 p.m.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Next Board Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Education will be held at Memorial Middle School on December 12, 2007.

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

Mrs. Adams made a motion, second Dr. Shoemaker to approve the minutes to the meeting of November 14, 2007. Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Flanagan, Ms. Gara, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Dr. Shoemaker voted yes. Mr. Currlin, Mrs. Golschneider abstained.

Communications: Mr. Currlin said he is sending a box to Melissa Golschneider in Afghanistan, from the Board of Education. He brought it with him tonight if anyone would like to see what he is sending. Mrs. Golschneider thanked everyone for their thoughtfulness; it means a lot to her and to Melissa.

Mr. Hennick said a meeting was held yesterday morning with the selectmen. Laura Francis, Durham 1st Selectwoman elect, joined the group. Mr. Hennick felt that it was a positive meeting.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro attended the Teacher of the Year Celebration with Betsy Bascom at Central CT State University. Mrs. Bascom will be honored at a Board meeting in January.

Mrs. Viccaro attended the CAPSS/CABE fall conference in Mystic. The guest speaker was Erin Gruwell, the author of the Freedom Writers. Mrs. Gruwell attended with one of her original students and was an amazing speaker.

Mrs. Viccaro distributed two publications she received at the conference, a publications pricelist from CABE and a flier on the CABE Leadership Institute.

Mrs. Viccaro attended a conference where the Secondary School Redesign was discussed. The Commissioner of Education spoke about the plan. They are in the process of holding community forums. There will be significant changes in the future. Some of the changes include: end of course state exams instead of the CAPT exam with students being expected to pass each exam before they can graduate, and more applied courses with a push toward engineering. This is the 3rd version and each version has been different. The Department of Education has fast tracked this plan and would like to have a document before the legislature in February.

Mrs. Viccaro said the Fall Sports Banquet was held this week. The second annual Powder Puff Football game was held during Thanksgiving Week.

The Community Round-up is being held this Saturday, December 1st from 9am to 12pm. Mrs. Viccaro invited Board members to stop by the high school to watch the sorting process after 10:30am.

Mrs. Viccaro clarified a question asked at the last meeting regarding the Strategic School Profiles and the student drop-out rate listed for 2005-06 at Coginchaug. The 15% drop-out rate reported is an error due to a flaw in the reporting system. This rate includes all students that have moved out of the District or have chosen to go to another school.

Mrs. Gara questioned Mrs. Viccaro on the transportation costs reported on the SSP. She said the District costs are high for our DRG. Mrs. Viccaro will look into the reasons and will report back at the next meeting.

Mrs. Viccaro said Strong School students have just completed a project to send holiday cards to US troops overseas. The students have created 350 cards that will be mailed to service men and women.

The kick-off meeting for Site Planning at Coginchaug will be held on Monday.

Dr. Wysowski attended a workshop on Engineering by Design. Portland currently uses this program. The consortium is considering partnering in this project. The District is exploring the options available.

Business Manager's Report: Mr. Melnik said he has been working on getting cost estimates for the wells, roofs, and the athletic field projects. He expects to have numbers available within the next two to three weeks. It has been discovered that there are areas of the track that are flagged as wetlands. Mr. Melnik attended a meeting of the Inland Wetland Commission to determine how this will affect the plan.

On Friday of this week, Mr. Melnik and Mr. Francis will be attending a School Facility Conference on energy efficiency planning.

Mr. Melnik said a new building committee needs to be formed to proceed with the project planning. Mr. Hennick said that he has already asked Mr. Currlin to serve as the chair of the Building Committee and Mrs. Gara has also volunteered to serve on the committee.

Mr. Melnik said a memo is going out to all staff regarding lowering all thermostats to 68° in all buildings throughout the winter.

Mr. Melnik said the budget process has started. The IT department has set-up new forms and they are currently working on a new format for the budget book and how to present the budget to the public. Mr. Melnik hopes that the new format will be easily understood and accepted.

Library Automation Program: Scott Nicol said that web based research is one of the primary skills that all students need to learn.

Michael Klimas, Library Media Specialist at Strong School, presented the new web based card catalog system currently being used at Strong and Memorial Schools. The new system allows students to access the library through the District website from any computer that has Internet access. There are also links established to the local libraries and to select WebPages. The system has only been up and running since mid October, so the teachers have not yet seen the full potential of the program but already they are seeing students become more proactive in using their research skills. The program also has the ability to chart the average age of the library collection and the strengths and weaknesses in certain areas of the collection. The program has been a great timesaver and asset to the District and both Mr. Klimas and Anne Doyle, Library Media Specialist at Memorial School, thanked the Board for supporting the purchase in last year's budget. Mr. Nicol thanked both teachers for all the work they have done to get the libraries up and running with the new program.

Mr. Klimas said the next logical step would be to upgrade the high school. The library is already automated; it will just involve a data upload and new staff training.

Proposed Playground at Brewster School: Nancy Heckler, Karen Buckley Bates, and Cathy DeBrum presented on the proposed playground that BKPTA would like Board approval for at Brewster School.

Mrs. Heckler said that last year after an audit done by the District's insurance company they learned that the current playscape would only be covered by insurance for one or two more years. There are many safety issues with the playscape that can not be easily repaired. The BKPTA has taken on the project of funding a new playground for the school through fundraising, grant writing and direct solicitation to families and businesses.

Karen Buckley Bates shared the playground plan. It includes two separate playscapes; one for children ages 2-5 and one for children ages 5-12. It also has a spacenet climber, a rock climbing area, saddle spinners, swing sets, picnic tables and benches. The total cost of the package including installation is \$127,443.00. The BKPTA will also be fundraising for playground beautification at Korn School to gain support of the Korn School families. Adding in this component brings the total cost to approximately \$150,000.00.

Ms. Bates said the BKPTA is not asking the Board to fund the playground, but to give permission for the group to do additional fundraising to reach their goal.

Mr. Melnik said he sent the playground proposal to the insurance company today and they said they would approve it with some minimal changes.

Mrs. Adams is concerned that if the District goes to all-day kindergarten and kindergarten ends up located at another site, then a preschool playground would not be needed at Brewster School. Mrs. Heckler said that the 2-5 year old playground will still get use by the older children who possess less gross motor skills, by the special needs children and by children who favor imaginative play over active play.

Mrs. Flanagan questioned the life the playground and what maintenance will need to be done. Mrs. Heckler said she expects the life to be about the same as the current playscape or about 20 years. Annual maintenance is done on the current playscape by our custodians and will be performed on the new playground as well and the company will come out to check it if necessary.

Mrs. Golschneider thanked the BKPTA representatives for all the work they have done.

On a motion by Mrs. Golschneider, second Dr. Shoemaker, the Board of Education unanimously granted the BKPTA permission to pursue building the proposed playground at Brewster School and to secure the necessary funding.

Show Choir Field Trip Request: On a motion by Mrs. Adams, second Dr. Shoemaker the Board of Education unanimously approved the field trip request for the Cuginchaug Show Choir to attend the Central Massachusetts Show Choir Festival in Dudley, MA on February 2, and 3, 2008.

Finance Committee: Ms. Parsons reported that the Finance Committee met last evening with the auditors. They are reporting a 1.3 million dollar surplus, as was expected. Their main issues are getting District control of the funds from the summer school program and the adult education program. From now on the District will handle these funds through the Central Office. Ms. Parsons said as a result of SAS-112 the District may have to have two independent audits performed. One will be a monthly review of the monthly statements and the other will be the annual audit.

The Finance Committee also met this evening with representatives from BASREP. No decisions were made. Both groups have a position and they are trying to work out an agreement.

On a motion by Mrs. Adams, second Mrs. Flanagan the Board of Education unanimously approved to move into Executive Session to discuss Administrator Evaluations.

The Board moved back into open session.

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