

The Regional District 13 Board of Education held a District Meeting on Monday, May 3 2010 at 8:00 p.m. in the auditorium at Cuginchaug High School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Currin, Mrs. Flanagan, Ms. Gara, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons. Also present: Mrs. Viccaro, Mr. Melnik.

Mr. Hicks called the meeting to order at 8:05 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Golschneider read the call of the meeting.

A motion was made by Rick Parmelee and seconded by Renee Edwards to elect David Montgomery as moderator. No other nominations were made. David Montgomery was unanimously elected as moderator.

Mr. Hicks highlighted important points in the advertisement in the Town Times.

Mr. Montgomery asked for questions from the public.

Elmer Clark of Durham asked who paid for the advertisement in the Town Times. Mr. Hicks responded that the ad was paid for by Board of Education members.

Paul Marosz of Durham said he read that the health benefits have increased by over 12%. He feels that teachers should be sharing more of the costs of their benefits. He is also concerned about the way teachers salaries are determined. If an agreement is not reached with the District during negotiations, it automatically goes to binding arbitration. If the District has a large surplus the arbitrators are going to side with the union.

Joan Zito of Durham asked if any of the Board members considered if the taxpayers can pay for this budget. She is concerned about adding football and the cost associated with it and whether it was truly mandated. She feels older many people are going to have to move out of town if costs continue to rise this way. She asked if a meeting was held with the gentleman (Mr. Yamartino) to discuss the cuts that he suggested. Mrs. Flanagan responded that a meeting was held with Mr. Yamartino. The Board did not choose to make any further cuts. Mrs. Zito feels that it is a conflict of interest for teachers to live in the town they work in. She wishes we would get rid of teachers unions. We need to be accountable back to the taxpayers.

Rick Parmelee of Durham said the Durham Board of Finance works hard to scrutinize spending and is accountable. He does not feel the BOE is accountable. He objects to fees for activities. The District has an obligation to students. He asked what outside groups are raising money for football. He feels we could reduce the number of administrators because enrollment is down. He has asked the selectman to call the teachers contract in the past and he thinks it is time to do it again. The unions are too powerful. He will not support the budget.

Gary Turner of Durham asked what the Board will cut when the budget fails. He also asked if the Board has seriously talked to the teachers about any givebacks from their contracts. Mr. Hicks said it has not been decided. The Board will go back to the drawing board, there are no plans yet. The Board has been in contact with all of the unions. The Board has no leverage as they are negotiated agreements.

Donia Viola of Durham does not support the budget. She wants the Board to ask the teachers to open their contract so adjustments can be made. Enrollments are decreasing but new hires are a constant. Sports are a bonus but we are here for academics. She wants the budget defeated so that cuts can be made that will make a difference. She feels stipends are excessive;

teachers should be willing to do extra without expecting a stipend for everything. Class sizes can be higher. Reports have shown that achievement is not tied to class size. The public is shortchanged by the lack of oversight by the boards of finance and the towns. Mrs. Viola also asked for an explanation of the increase in the Central Office account.

Theresa Opalacz of Durham asked for someone on the Board to address the reserve question that has come up in the Town Times. Ms. Parson explained that there was a surplus in the audit of Dec 09 from the prior year through June 09 of \$2,200,000. Of that \$1,000,000 is being used in this year's budget. The other \$1,200,000 is proposed to be used as revenue for 2010-11. At the end of this June it is estimated that a surplus of \$700,000 will be left in the operating budget. It is proposed to also apply \$600,000 of that money to the 2010-11 budget as well. Only \$100,000 will not be committed to the budget year 2010-11. Mrs. Opalacz supports having some money set aside and she wants to be sure the Board keeps enough for unknown circumstances. She thanked the Board for their commitment and will support the budget.

Jeremy Renninghoff of Middlefield, a member of the Middlefield Board of Finance, said the issue he still has is regarding the Board's budgeting of 100% of wages for teachers salaries in the salary object account. He said there is always a large surplus in this account every year. In the 08-09 year there was \$670,000 left in this account. If this budget goes down, he hopes the Board will look at this account in more detail. Mr. Renninghoff does not feel that the District's bond rating will be affected by lowering the fund balance. The fund balance of the towns making up the District is what makes up the bond rating. He is glad the fund balance is being brought down to a more reasonable level. Mr. Renninghoff said he has spent some time reviewing old District documents and there were times in the past that the District had to go back to the townspeople to ask for more money to cover an extraordinary expense. He does not think that the District should be afraid to do this, as there is a mechanism in place if more funds are necessary.

Paul Marosz asked for an answer to his earlier question about increasing the teacher's portion of the health benefits. Mrs. Flanagan said the Personnel Policies Committee has been successful in increasing the co-pays for health care and cost paid for prescriptions in every contract they have negotiated since she has been on the Board. Each contract is paying 1% more for their co-pays. The increase cost is due in large part to the rising cost of health insurance in general.

Rick Parmelee said if enough voters turn the contracts down it will make a difference. He asked for an answer to his question about contributors to the football program. Mr. Currin explained that there are many in-kind contributions that have been offered such as contractors that want to help clear the Stannard Property. There are also groups such as the football boosters that raise money for extra items such as sweatshirts and extra equipment. He does not have an estimate about how much money this will save.

Donia Viola asked for an explanation of what makes up the \$900,000 increase in the Central Office account. Mr. Melnik said that most of it is for a \$550,000 increase in the cost of health insurance. The rest of it is made up of increases in many other areas that fall under the Central Office account. It would take time to come up with a detailed listing of what makes up the total.

On a motion by Chris Flanagan, second Rick Parmelee, the District Meeting was adjourned.