

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, January 27, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. in the library at Coginchaug High School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Currilin, Mrs. Flanagan, Ms. Gara, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons. Member absent: Mrs. Golschneider. Also present: Mr. Melnik, Mrs. Viccaro.

Mr. Hennick called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Mr. Hennick thanked the public for attending and said most of this meeting would be devoted to a discussion of the budget. He wants to hear suggestions and concerns from the public prior to the budget presentation in March.

On a motion by Mr. Currilin, second Mrs. Boyle, the Board unanimously approved the agenda as amended to include an Executive Session to discuss a pending claim regarding a District 13 employee and to move the budget discussion to after communications on the agenda.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, second Dr. Ochterski to approve the minutes to the meeting of January 13, 2010. Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Currilin, Ms. Gara, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons voted yes. Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Flanagan abstained.

Communications: Mr. Hicks said he visited Lyman School for an assembly with one of their artists in residence and was warmly welcomed by the Hello Chorus.

Dr. Ochterski attended the Memorial School Band Concert. He enjoyed seeing how much fun the kids were having.

Mrs. Boyle attended the Parents' Forum at the high school and the Strong School PTO meeting. She also attended the Memorial School band and chorus concerts. They were very well attended.

Budget: Scott Wheeler of Durham is concerned that construction projects in the District are not completed. He wants to make sure that the District stays solvent. He wants to be sure that the foundation is maintained before adding on anything else.

Debbie Sokol feels that more enrichment programs are needed for the younger grades.

Janice Keeman asked the Board to be mindful of the wonderful program choices available in the District including the ID program, the Contemporary program and the magnet school program.

Lucy Meigs asked the Board to share with the public any plans they have for cuts so they can give feedback early. Mrs. Viccaro said it was too early to do that but it would be possible later.

Jeremy Renninghoff, of the Middlefield Board of Finance said that enrollment is declining. He told that Board that they shouldn't hire staff to help one program when the enrollment is decreasing. He has concerns about the fund balance. He feels the percentage is too high and that money from the account needs to be drawn down dramatically.

Rick Parmelee appreciates that this meeting has been opened up to the public. He asked for the salaries of the Superintendent and the Business Manager to be made public. He doesn't want to continue to fund the capital account. The budget needs to be reflective of the times. He said if a budget fails the Board should not bring back the same one. He continued to speak out against activity fees.

Kristen Prout understands the difficulties of the recession as she has been faced with job loss in her own family but she does not want her kids to go without just because they are growing up during this time. They still need the support to get a good education.

Theresa Opalacz asked the Board to look at combining bus tiers again. Other Districts have K-6 students ride together and she is sure that our kids would be fine. She also feels that the District should reassess the number of stops along the routes. With the declining enrollments she feels there could be savings by eliminating portables. We could see about breaking leases or at least shut down portables for savings. She does not want to see class sizes increase. Mrs. Opalacz asked the Board to go out to bid on all contracts to negotiate savings. She supports charging activity fees over elimination of a program or activity.

Bob Yamartino of the Middlefield Board of Finance has been studying the demographics of the two towns. He said the unemployment rate in Durham and Middlefield is at a ten year high. He would like to see the budget compared to the actual expenditures from the year before, not the prior budget. By reviewing the audit he was able to tell that the actual expenditures increased last year to this year by 3.7%. He would like to see forecasting to the end of the school year to see estimates of actual expenditures. He suggested a cost saving idea - to move a school vacation out of April and into January where we would be able to save from closing the buildings during a heating cycle. He wants the Board to look outside the box for ways to cut overhead.

Steve Reynolds is grateful for the support that his son has received in the preschool program. The support this District provides for students with extra needs is phenomenal. He would like the District to consider putting back the Talented & Gifted program that was cut years ago to meet the needs of those students.

Susan Michael, a teacher at CRHS and a parent of a senior is concerned about the number of students in some of the classes at the high school. Her son has 29 kids in his math class and some classes have 31 students. It is difficult for teachers to connect with their students when their classes are that large. She is concerned that if teachers get cut students will end up in more study halls again. She has been told that field trips are already cut from next year's budget. She hopes that the Board will still fund the substitutes for trips if the trips are self-funding. She understands the need for activity fees; she would rather have them, than lose the club or activity.

Diane Swanson said her daughter has thrived from being a part of a team at Cuginchaug. She would hate to see any sport cut; she would rather pay a fee. She asked the Board to be very cautious about cutting programs or field trips; these experiences are what the kids remember.

Becky Finnerty said that if we keep cutting activities it will hurt kids when they are applying to colleges. Fees should be charged as a last resort.

SRBI: Carol Luckenbach, District Curriculum Coordinator showed a PowerPoint presentation regarding Scientific Research Based Interventions. It is a method for tracking how students respond to interventions. Common Formative Assessments are developed as the students are mastering concepts and skills. The District currently has several different data teams in place.

Dr. Wysowski said at the high school the teams are department based. The departments are concentrating as a whole on one area before moving onto another area.

Mr. Brough said the data team models at the middle schools are significantly different. They are using a grade level approach at Memorial and at Strong School the teams are divided by the academic teams. Mr. Brough said he finds the greatest asset of the data teams is that they are looking at student learning while they are learning and they can make adjustments as necessary.

Mrs. Heckler said the teams are similar at all three elementary schools, organized by grade levels. Each elementary school also has its own school level data team. Mrs. Heckler reviewed a Data Team Cycle and shared a video of a data team meeting at Brewster. Mrs. Heckler said that arranging planning time for the teams is very difficult. Teachers are often meeting on their own time during lunch to get this accomplished.

Mrs. Luckenbach said the optimum time for meeting is once a week; once a month is the minimum. Release days will help because it will give the groups sustained time to meet and to create new common formative assessments.

Mr. Hennick asked if we are spending too much time collecting data and if it is taking away from instruction time. Mrs. Luckenbach does not think it is taking away from instruction, it is adding to it. The instruction is more focused, targeted and efficient.

Mrs. Adams asked if other districts have been doing the assessments for longer than we have and what results they have found. Dr. Wysowski said there may be some that are a little farther along, but he thinks most districts are at about where our District is now.

2010-2011 Calendar: Mrs. Viccaro explained the changes proposed to the calendar. It has been increased to 182 student days. There are three full professional development days (down from four) and 5 half professional development days. The days added to the calendar at the end of the year due to inclement weather has been changed from 5 to 4. The half days of professional development would all be used for data team work. Mrs. Viccaro said the Board needs to decide whether the half days for the data team work are early dismissal days or late arrival days.

Mrs. Brimecombe asked that the May 27th half day be added back into the calendar as it is used for transition meetings.

Mrs. Boyle is concerned that more half days will take away from instruction time as half days are not as productive.

Mr. Currlin said that instruction time may be less but in the end we are looking at providing better instruction.

Mrs. Adams thinks a delayed opening will be more productive for teachers. Teachers will be more focused and kids will not be in the building for other reasons.

Mr. Hicks has worked with data teams and said it does consume a great deal of teachers' time. He supported the proposed calendar changes.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, second Mrs. Adams to approve the 2010-2011 calendar as presented with the May 27th early dismissal added and the five days for Data Team work being changed to 2 hour delayed opening days. Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currlin, Mrs. Flanagan, Ms. Gara, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons voted yes. Mrs. Boyle voted no.

Finance Committee: Ms. Parsons said the Finance Committee met this evening with the representative from Merrill Lynch to review the investments. Investments are slightly ahead of last year. Merrill Lynch will be back at the end of February to discuss the plan for combining the funds into one plan.

Communications Committee: The committee met and discussed the coordination of a master schedule between academic activities and sporting events. Mr. Currlin question whether the towns Board of Finance members get copies of the minutes sent to them. They do not, but they are accessible through the Town of Durham website and through the District website. Mrs. Boyle will ask if they want copies of the minutes sent to them directly.

On a motion by Mrs. Adams, second Mr. Hicks, the Board of Education unanimously approved to move into Executive Session to discuss a pending claim regarding a District 13 employee.

The Board moved back into regular session.

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