

The Regional District 13 Board of Education held a District Meeting on Monday, May 2, 2011 at 8:00 p.m. in the auditorium at Coginchaug High School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Currilin, Mrs. Flanagan, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons. Also present: Mrs. Viccaro, Mr. Melnik.

Mr. Hicks called the meeting to order at 8:01 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Golschneider read the call of the meeting.

A motion was made by Roger Kleeman, second Rick Parmelee to elect David Montgomery as moderator. No other nominations were made. Mr. Parmelee questioned the process of selecting a moderator. He wanted to be assured that no instructions are given to the moderator in advance of the meeting that would sway the meeting. Mrs. Viccaro said she requested Mr. Montgomery as moderator as they are very hard to find. They met briefly to review the procedures for the meeting. David Montgomery was unanimously elected as moderator.

Mr. Montgomery welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that any comments being made this evening be in regards to the proposed education budget. He turned the meeting over to the Board of Education for a brief presentation.

Mrs. Viccaro reminded those present of the District values and the Mission Statement. She reviewed the enrollment projections for next year. The kindergarten enrollment has the most significant reduction.

Mrs. Flanagan discussed the 5 year Capital Reserve Plan. She reviewed the plan for the 2011-12 school year and said there is very little in the plan for next year because of budget constraints. Many items, such as technology equipment, are handled through leasing agreements. There are some projects that are too large for the capital fund to support and they will need to be bonded for in the near future. The goal of the capital plan is to not increase the debt payments of the District in the future. As current debt is retired they will begin to take on the new projects, but not until.

Ms. Parsons reviewed the proposed operating budget. There is only a .92% increase in expenses. The revenue coming into the District is less, causing the net increase in the budget to be 4.16%. This is the amount that will have to be raised by taxes. Ms. Parsons reviewed the budget reductions made by the Board since the Superintendent presented the budget at the beginning of March.

Mrs. Viccaro summarized by saying that continued focus on instruction, the integration of technology at all levels, individual student support, maintaining the District infrastructure, continuation of the new Strategic Planning initiatives, and the continuing to update textbooks will be priorities for the District in the coming year.

Mr. Montgomery opened the floor to questions.

Kirk Peterson of Durham asked why building maintenance is part of the Capital Reserve Plan instead of in the operating budget. Mrs. Flanagan explained that this amount is in case they run over in expenses for one of the capital projects or if something unexpected comes up that needs to be dealt with immediately.

Mr. Peterson asked if the Board has taken a look at restructuring the administration at Central Office. It appears that there are 3 administrators supervising 10 support personnel. Mrs.

Viccaro explained that the three administrators within Central Office have responsibilities reaching far wider than the support staff within the Central Office. Mrs. Viccaro has the supervisory responsibility of the entire District, Mr. Melnik is responsible for all of the custodial and cafeteria staff and well as many functions of the Central Office and Mrs. Emory oversees a Pupil Personnel staff of well over 100 people.

Mrs. Flanagan explained that the Board is going to be launching a facilities study that will be looking at whether we still need to have six school buildings. If effective, this approach will have more effect than just cutting administration. The Board supports the number of administrators we currently have in place. The Board has also reviewed data on administrative positions per head count from around the state and for both numbers and cost we are below the State average.

Rick Parmelee of Durham said he recently attended a Board of Education meeting and asked for information on the salaries of the top administrators in the District. He asked that this information be read to those present. Mr. Melnik had a document prepared and shared the 2010-11 salaries and the TSAs (tax sheltered annuity) contributions given to each of the building principals, the Pupil Personnel Director, Special Education Coordinator, Curriculum Director, Business Manager, Superintendent, Buildings & Grounds Supervisor and Facilities Director.

Mr. Parmelee does not support charging activity fees. There is \$15,000 as a line item in the budget for fees. This does not allow equal access for all students to participate and he feels it should be eliminated.

Regarding the fund balance, he reminded the Board that this is still the taxpayer's money, but it is never given back to the towns. Mr. Parmelee was glad that the Board listened to the constituents and reinstated the nursing position but they should have made reductions to equal the cost. In the past the budget had to go up because enrollment was going up. The budget is still going up even though enrollment is going down. It is not appropriate for this economy and he cannot support this budget.

Donia Viola of Durham said she was upset at a recent Board Meeting she attended. The State continues mandates without the funding or offers grants and then takes them away and the District has to continue funding a position or program. She asked why we have a Facilities Manager and a Buildings & Grounds Supervisor. Mr. Melnik said the Facilities Manager is a certified electrician and he is more hands on in the buildings. Mrs. Viola feels the travel allowance should be eliminated for everyone. It can be handled through their own income tax filling. Without cutting more the Board has not done their job. The budget is too inflated and she does not support it.

Teresa Opalacz of Durham supports this budget and will be voting yes. She said as she has been talking about the budget many people have asked her how other neighboring towns have been able to come in at a much lower increase when faced with the same issues. Mr. Melnik said the expense side has been very controlled but it is on the revenue side that we are really struggling. The problem began two years ago when we started using the fund balance to keep the budget down. It has caught up with us.

Norm Jason of Durham asked for an explanation of the system to evaluate the administrative team. Mrs. Viccaro said she is responsible for evaluating all of the administrators and the Board of Education evaluates her.

Clay Howe of Durham is sad that more people are not here. He congratulated the Board for the work done and asked that in the future they refrain from using terminology such as TSA that

the public might not understand. He hopes that people come out to vote; as citizens we need to do our part and participate in democracy.

A resident of Durham asked for an explanation of the percentage increase, whether it included the expense side or if it needed to be deducted. Mr. Melnik explained that the 4.16% increase is inclusive of the expenses.

Chris Morganti of Durham asked what the per pupil cost is under this budget. Mr. Melnik did not have the figure for next year but this year the cost is \$14,130 and he said it will go up by about 6%.

Mr. Peterson asked if the TSAs that the administrators receive are a match or a contribution. Mr. Melnik said a contribution.

Barbara Sanders of Durham asked if the vote goes down where the Board expects to make changes and how much.

Mr. Montgomery responded that the Board has to follow State Statute in regards to a timeline for bringing the budget back to the voters but they do not necessarily have to make additional cuts.

Mrs. Viccaro said the administrative team would meet again and then the Board would discuss where cuts could come from. The whole budget will be looked at again.

Mr. Peterson asked if the District was able to achieve the targeted average class size with this budget. Mrs. Viccaro said the class sizes are within the guidelines. Some are higher than others, depending on the level.

Mr. Parmelee thanked the Board for bringing the budget to a referendum; that hasn't always happened in the past.

Mr. Montgomery asked if technology such as Kindles and Nooks will have an impact in the foreseeable future regarding the purchasing of textbooks. Mrs. Flanagan said the Board is still understanding the impact of personal technology in schools. It is not included in this budget but she is sure they will be dealing with it more in the near future.

Mrs. Viola said Durham residents will be seeing a 3.86 mil increase. Of that amount 3.21 is attributed to the school district budget.

Mr. Montgomery read the State Statute regarding who is eligible to vote in the referendum.

On a motion by Mr. Parmelee, second Ms. Opalacz, the Public Hearing unanimously adjourned at 9:12pm.