

The Regional District 13 Board of Education held a public hearing on Wednesday, April 6, 2011 at 8:00 p.m. in the auditorium at Coginchaug High School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Currin, Mrs. Flanagan, Ms. Gara, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons. Member absent: Mrs. Golschneider. Also present: Mrs. Viccaro, Mr. Melnik.

Mr. Hennick called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Hicks read the call of the meeting.

Mr. Hennick explained the purpose of the hearing and thanked everyone for attending. He said a vote would be taken by the Board at the conclusion of this meeting on a budget amount to bring to the District Meeting on May 2nd and to the Referendum on May 3rd.

Mrs. Viccaro read the Mission Statement of the District and explained that the budget was built on the needs of six buildings within the District. There is a great deal of land and square footage to be maintained each year.

Mrs. Flanagan explained the capital plan revisions suggested by the Board. The plan has been expanded by one more year. The cost of this year's capital plan was higher due to the issues with the Brewster School wells. It has become apparent that the capital plan will not be able to fund all of the facility needs in the District. They are looking at going out to bond at the end of 2012-13 for money to support some of the capital projects. The goal is to not increase the debt payment schedule any higher than it currently is. The Board will not take on any new debt until other debt is paid off.

Ms. Parsons discussed the operating budget for the 2011-2012 school year. She reviewed the budget summary and explained that the gross expenses are up only .75%. The net District budget is up by 3.98% due to a loss of revenue, mostly because the fund balance carry-over is no longer there. It is anticipated that there will only be \$489,000 left unappropriated in the fund balance carry-over at the end of this school year. Ms. Parsons also reviewed the budget reductions made to date by the Board at the prior budget meetings.

Mrs. Viccaro reviewed the staffing changes. She explained that the nurse was cut in response to the Board's request to get the budget increase below 4%. When the administrative council met it was decided that the instructional staff had already been cut enough and they looked at other ways to reach the budget goal. Mrs. Viccaro was instrumental in securing a nurse for each of the District's schools but she feels that it is a cut that can be made. They are still in the process of reviewing times of peak need and scheduling issues for each of the District nurse's offices, but she feels a schedule can be worked out.

Mrs. Boyle discussed the results of the budget survey. She said 410 people responded to the survey. At the April 27th Board of Education meeting the results of the survey will be discussed in greater detail. She apologized for the timing of the survey as it is too late in this year's budget process for many of the ideas to be considered. Mrs. Boyle shared a sampling of some of the results and said the results will be made available to the public.

Mr. Hennick thanked Mrs. Boyle and the Communications Committee for the work they did preparing and compiling the survey results. Mr. Hennick opened the floor for questions and comments.

Anne Juncadella, the nurse from Strong School spoke representing all of the District nurses. They are very upset; they have always provided continuity of care to the children of the District. Removing a nurse will result in fragmented care. She asked the Board to please reconsider and put the nurse back in the budget.

Joanne Nyth, of Durham and the nurse from Memorial School said she has been in the District for 24 years. She covered three schools, then two, and finally just one. She knows from experience that it does not work. In the past they had health assistants in the buildings that knew first aid and CPR. She has not heard that they are being added back with this plan. There have been an increasing number of complicated health issues each year. She also asked for the position to be reinstated.

Fran Ciarleglio, a Brewster parent and a sub nurse in the District, does not want children to be at risk. The cut of a nurse is unreasonable. She knows that other people do not want to cover the nurse's office and they shouldn't have to, they don't have the expertise. We need to leave the health of our children to the nurses.

Rhonda Riggott Stevens of Durham has two children who have serious anaphylactic allergies and asthma. She implored the Board to not eliminate the nursing position. The nurse is the only person in the building who has the complete picture of the child. The District nurses have been wonderful with her and her children and she has always felt safe sending them to school. One of her children will be attending Coginchaug next year and now she will have to worry that there may not be a nurse in the building when she needs it.

Lisa Hill of Durham has two daughters in the District. She feels it is irresponsible to cut the nurse. There is no fill-in that can replace the school nurse.

Rich Parmelee of Durham said this budget has no previous review by anyone prior to this meeting. He strongly supports the people regarding the nursing position. Funding from Hartford is down. A 4% increase is spending money that we don't have. We have to tighten our belts farther. He is against student activity fees. We have an obligation to pay for children, it should be an equal footing for all to be able to participate.

Suzanne Isner is a parent and a nurse in another school district. On paper it may seem like a good plan to eliminate the nurse, but it won't work in practice. There is also a legal risk and that would cost the district a lot more.

Roger Kleeman of Durham had specific questions regarding line items in the budget booklet. He questioned why there is a 22% increase in the 442 account. Mr. Melnik responded that this is for leasing of computers. Mr. Kleeman asked why the 610 supply account for the principals' offices increased from an actual expenditure of \$44,000 in 09-10 to an approved budget of \$72,000 in 10-11. He asked what we bought this year. Mr. Melnik did not have that answer but said he would get back to Mr. Kleeman with the information. Mr. Kleeman also questioned the increase in the 2010-11 610 nursing supply budget from the actual expenditure of 09-10. Mr. Kleeman also pointed out a couple of errors in percentage of increase presented in the booklet.

Peg Cross of Durham is a parent of a child with a tree nut allergy. Her child had a serious asthma attack while at Korn School and it was the nurse who quickly recognized that he was in distress. The nurses are irreplaceable.

Leanne Slawinowski is a support staff employee at Korn School. She was a member of the District Strategic Planning Committee and reminded Board members that connectedness is one of the priorities of the plan. She feels the nurses are one of the main people in the school building most connected to the children. She finds it difficult to understand how the Board

could consider this cut and asked members to think about it from this perspective as well as the health perspective.

Barbara Simonetta spoke as the union representative of the school nurses. She feels the District will be taking a step backwards if we do not have a nurse in each school building.

Rick Handley of Durham is speaking for both himself and for his wife. His son had a serious injury while at John Lyman School and having the nurse present was very important. There has to be a level of continuity. We can't go backwards.

Mary Ellen Johnson, the nurse from Brewster School said nurses do support the educational process. Statistics show that with a school nurse present in the building only 5% of kids are sent home from school sick. When others evaluate the students' illness 18% are sent home.

The meeting adjourned at 9:38 p.m.