

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, September 15, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. in the music room at John Lyman School. Board members present: Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Currin, Ms. Gara, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski. Members absent: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Flanagan, Mrs. Golschneider, Ms. Parsons. Also present: Mr. Melnik, Mrs. Viccaro.

Mr. Hennick called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

Public Comment: Donia Viola of Durham is concerned about the water supply for the wells at Brewster School. She does not want the District to consider lowering the standard for the level of arsenic and sulfur in the water. It is a safety situation and the health of the children is at stake. She does not want the District to compromise on this issue. Mrs. Viola also presented an article from USA Today regarding the evaluation of teachers. She feels that CT did not receive any of the federal Race to the Top funding because the State does not recognize the reforms needed in the teacher evaluation process. She asked that a copy of the article be given to each Board member. Mrs. Viola also feels that the District should participate in the Healthy Schools program for school lunches. She does not care about the cost savings as much as she is concerned about childhood obesity and with this program the food served will have to meet the State standards for nutrition. Exceptions are regularly granted for sale of food at after school activities so she does not feel this is a reason to reject the program.

Mr. Hennick said the District would never put the safety of the children at risk.

Mr. Melnik explained that three wells were drilled at Brewster School. Of the three, two contained no arsenic, one does contain some, but the amount is below the State standard of acceptability. No determination has been made as to what the District is going to do yet. Safety is the first concern and he is sure we will be well below all guidelines.

Robert Johnson of Rockfall had questions regarding the building project. The transfer of authority from the old building committee to the new building committee took place this past summer. With this transfer \$330,000 that was designated for parking areas was also transferred. Mr. Johnson questioned where this money has been since the completion of the last project.

Mr. Melnik said the last project was completed in 2007 and then the State completed their audit of the project in 2008. Since that time the balance of the funding has been in the fund balance. The \$330,000 was the amount designated in the original educational specifications for the first project as a place holder for paving. It is allowed to transfer that money to be used for the same purpose.

Mr. Johnson asked if the \$330,000 was a part of the \$440,000 total for paving listed in the presentation for the current project or if it was in addition to it. Mr. Melnik said it was included.

Mr. Johnson asked if the Committee plans to put in light towers at the new field or just the bases. Mr. Currin responded that the Committee still does not know if it will have enough money for the lights; for now only the bases have been included in the project. The alternate for the lights have not been approved by the committee.

Mr. Johnson had more questions regarding the building project. Mr. Hennick felt that his questions would be better answered at a Building Committee meeting and told Mr. Johnson that he would be allowed to speak at the Building Committee meeting. Mr. Johnson agreed and will attend that meeting.

Next Board Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Education will take place at Brewster School on September 29, 2010.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Boyle, the Board of Education unanimously approved the agenda.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Dr. Ochterski, the Board of Education unanimously approved the minutes to the meeting of August 25, 2010.

Communications: Mr. Hicks said he attended the opening day meeting for staff. It went very smoothly and many awards were given. He also attended a workshop with Mrs. Viccaro today on highly effective schools. He said school boards are getting more involved in staff development and teacher evaluation.

Mrs. Boyle said the daily announcements at the high school are being sent out by email. They contain a lot of information and she has heard great feedback from parents.

Mrs. Boyle mentioned an email she received today about a seminar on increasing CMT results. Mrs. Viccaro said she is going to look into it but they seemed to focus on schools that didn't meet AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress).

Mrs. Boyle said she has been contacted by several parents regarding the new delayed openings in the school calendar. She asked if it could be talked about as an agenda item at a later date.

Mr. Hennick said he has also heard from parents with concerns about the delayed openings. Mr. Hennick has confirmed Anne Littlefield's attendance at the retreat on October 24th. He would like Board members to send their questions for her to him in advance of the meeting. He would also like any agenda items for the rest of the day to be sent to him and to Mrs. Viccaro.

Mrs. Boyle said she has had a positive experience with the new point of service system for her children. Adding money to their cards was very easy.

Ms. Gara said she has heard some complaints that the lines are very long and the kids don't have enough time to eat. Mr. Melnik said it was slow in the beginning but they are getting better each day as the employees are more trained.

Friends of Education Awards: Mrs. Viccaro presented the Friends of Education Award to Bruce Tubby and Walt Sanford for their volunteer work with Korn School students on the Trout in the Classroom program. They were nominated by Noreen Oslander and have been doing this project with the students for the past two years. All of the students in the school participated in the project.

Mrs. Viccaro also presented the Friends of Education Award to Karen Buckley Bates and Kathy DeBrum for the work they did over the past three years as the chairs of the Brewster School Playground Committee. They were nominated by the Brewster School Principal, Nancy Heckler.

Mr. Hennick sincerely thanked all of the award recipients on behalf of the Board of Education.

Mr. Tubby said the enthusiasm of the children was the greatest gift. The students embraced the work and are a pleasure to be with.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro said the opening day of school went very well in all of the buildings. The opening day enrollments were as follows: Brewster 271, Korn 200, Lyman 321, Memorial 334, Strong 350, Coginchaug 572, Thomas Edison 8, and Out of District 10; for a total of 2066 students.

Mrs. Viccaro distributed two letters from parents regarding the delayed opening days. She said BASREP has offered to accept students that need day care in the mornings. Parents are asking the Board for help in paying for child care. Mrs. Viccaro reminded the Board of the reasons why we selected to have the delayed openings instead of early dismissals or full professional days. It is a pilot this year to see how it works. She does not want to make a change in the calendar for this year.

Mrs. Brimecombe said she feels change is hard for people. She has also heard from parents that early dismissal days are difficult.

Mrs. Heckler said the only parents she has heard from are kindergarten parents who were concerned that their children may be missing days of school. Once she assured them that they would be just having shortened days they were fine. The teachers are excited about the time the delayed opening days will give them to work uninterrupted on their data plans.

Board members asked if we could begin to think about alternative options for parents who have child care concerns. Mrs. Viccaro thought there may be some possibilities available for next year involving the use of interns or support staff.

Mrs. Viccaro said she had information regarding the questions raised about National Honor Society. The high school principal has oversight authority for the committee. He selects the advisor and the selection committee. He can remove students from NHS membership for violations and he can ask the selection committee to take another look at a candidate. Two parents have contacted Mrs. Viccaro or Mr. Hauser regarding NHS. Mr. Hauser will be responding to their concerns. She believes we are following the national guidelines for selection. The selection committee make-up does change; it is not always the same people.

Mr. Hicks feels that Coginchaug "sets the bar high" for acceptance. It is unfair to compare Coginchaug to other schools. He feels they are doing the right thing.

Mrs. Viccaro asked Mr. Melnik to give an update on the installation of the solar panels at Lyman and Memorial Schools.

Mr. Melnik said the panels at Lyman are almost fully installed. They are very impressive. They will be starting on Memorial School next. They should be operational in about six weeks. The installers have been great to work with. They are also going to be spending time volunteering in the classrooms after the completion of the project.

Mrs. Viccaro said a full day of professional development for teachers was held last week. The high school and Strong School teachers worked on Implementing SRBI at the Secondary Level, all elementary level teachers were at Lyman for a presentation on Literacy Strategies to Support RTI with an outside presenter that was amazing. The special education teachers worked on individualized programming for students with significant needs and ABA and Transition Programming, the counselors had a presentation on teen prescription drug abuse, speech personnel worked on Communicative Intent and the ASD Student and the art, PE and music teachers worked on Performance Based CFAs. These were all very necessary and important professional development activities. Ninety-nine percent of the evaluations for the day were very positive.

Mrs. Viccaro said she has been working with Durham Fair personnel regarding parking for the fair. Handicapped parking will be at Strong School on Thursday and will be at the high school on Friday through Sunday. She feels they have a good plan in place.

Building Committee Report: Mr. Currlin reviewed some of the current scheduling for the project. He said the light bases have been installed. The sidewalks are being poured and the field is almost ready for the Field Turf. On Monday the contractors for Field Turf will arrive to inspect the field. The turf should be shipping soon. It will take about twenty days to install. The track surface is still being finalized. The paving of the track surface will take about five days and then the surfacing will begin. The drainage work is still on-going. The bleachers are being cut in; footings are being installed now. The Committee was scheduled to attend the Planning & Zoning meeting this evening but it has been postponed because the District did not properly post signage stating that we were applying for a permit. The Committee will attend a meeting in October.

Magnet School: Mr. Hicks said the magnet school hit their target for enrollment. They are also on budget. Sixteen students are coming from districts that are non-partners.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Dr. Ochterski, the Board of Education unanimously approved to adjourn at 8:40 p.m.