

The Regional District 13 Board of Education held a public hearing on Wednesday, April 11, 2012 at 8:00 p.m. in the auditorium at Coginchaug High School. Board members present: Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Mr. Fulton, Ms. Gara, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Renninghoff. Member absent: Mrs. Adams. Also present: Mrs. Mangini, Mrs. Viccaro.

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 and the Return of the Call.

Mr. Hennick talked about the budget process for the District and reviewed important dates and the Mission Statement. He shared a budget overview, explaining that the proposed gross budget increase of 3.43 % was unanimously approved by the Board.

Mr. Fulton discussed the town assessments and the drop in student enrollment. He explained that Durham's assessment will be increasing slightly due to a shift in the student population. Mr. Fulton explained that the Board has commissioned a demographic study to complete a ten-year projection of enrollments. This study should be ready in May. Mr. Fulton also presented the budget summary sheet and information on estimated receipts that are projected to increase by 6.5%.

Ms. Parsons discussed the District fund balance. She explained that \$913,364 has been reserved for the 2012-2013 budget. We do not know yet what the surplus from this year will be and won't know until the audit is complete in December of 2012. That money will be used for the following year budget. Ms. Parsons explained the increase in the salary account. The account is increasing by 2.6%. Salary increases account for about 44% of the total expense budget. Ms. Parsons reviewed the staffing increases and discussed the summary of union contract increases and that shows that co-pays are continuing to increase for employees.

Ms. Gara discussed the benefits portion of the budget increase. Benefits are up by a total of 8.8%. Health insurance is increasing by 8.3% which is much less than in the past few years. Unemployment compensation and workers' compensation will both be increasing next year. The FICA and pension accounts are being adjusted to reflect actuarial recommendations. The purchased services account is decreasing by 2.8%. Included in this area is the District's share of the cost for the installation of the new traffic light at Pickett Lane and money for the NEASC visiting committee visit. Property services are increasing by 5.4%. This reflects an increase in district-wide technology leases and rental of equipment.

Mr. Renninghoff discussed the operating expenses. This account is decreasing by about \$16,000. Although the bus contract will increase this year, the elimination of the mid-day bus run will save over \$70,000. The supplies budget will see a slight increase of 1.5%. Electricity is decreasing due to conservation efforts and the installation of solar panels and we have locked in a price for heating oil for next year. The purchase of books has increased in preparation for the Common Core. The Capital account is seeing a major increase due to a \$150,000 contribution to the Capital Reserve Fund. Last year nothing was added to the fund. There is also an increase in classroom technology with the inclusion of the new website, PowerSchool and SIS. Mr. Renninghoff reviewed all of the capital projects that have been completed in the last few years and their funding sources. He said the dues and fees account has seen a moderate increase of \$2,600. The debt service account is seeing a decrease of \$88,000.

Dr. Ochterski reviewed a pie chart showing the expenses by category. He explained that 75% of the expenses are made up of salaries and benefits. Dr. Ochterski reviewed the five year capital project plan. The goal of the plan is to make the tax dollars go farther but funding for the plan was eliminated when budgets have gone down in the past.

Mrs. Flanagan reviewed the Long Range Capital Reserve Plan. She explained that they are looking to fund the plan with \$150,000 this year. \$53,808 has been returned to the fund from the building

project. This money was part of a transfer for the Brewster School wells and not all of it was expended. Mrs. Flanagan also explained how bonding was used to fund the major projects and showed how the money was expended. \$470,000 was transferred from the old building project to the athletic facilities project and was used for paving the parking lots. \$70,803 is being applied to pay down the District debt.

Mr. Hicks discussed the Curriculum and Achievement plan. The budget includes money to fund the restructured job responsibilities of the Director of Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction, provide curriculum revisions for the Common Core, implement all-day kindergarten, purchase textbooks, provide increased staff development, and add literacy and math tutors at the elementary schools. Mr. Hicks presented the benefits of all day kindergarten.

Mrs. Boyle discussed the changes in communication and technology. As a part of a strategic plan initiative the District will be developing a new website that will include a user friendly district-wide calendar. We will be implementing the 3rd year of a 5-year technology plan and replacing the computer lab at Strong School and expanding labs at Brewster and Lyman. Mrs. Boyle reviewed the major initiatives for the 2012-2013 school year; they include: Common Core Standards, All Day Kindergarten, literacy and math tutors, implementation of the technology plan and creation of a new District website.

The floor was opened to comments and questions.

Christina Dryfuss of Durham has two young children. She has circulated a paper petition in support of all day kindergarten. To date they have 65 signatures in support. She feels the change is long overdue and wants the kids to be competitive with other towns.

Denise Brennan of Durham has two kids at the high school. She is an educator and also supports all day kindergarten. There is just not enough time to get everything done in a half day program.

Jerilyn Fleck supports all day kindergarten and embraces the rigor that our District provides. She was also concerned about the reduction in time for the art teacher at Lyman with it being a HOT School. Mrs. Viccaro explained that the art classes will be able to be covered and the new part time position will receive HOT training.

Jenny Lussier has an incoming kindergartener and a 1st grader. She supports the budget as presented. She supports all day kindergarten and the literacy and math tutors.

Donia Viola of Durham said she is impressed by the change in the presentation format. She does not think we need to implement all day kindergarten; readiness comes from the home. She asked why the retirement of the principal at John Lyman was not reflected in the budget. Mrs. Viccaro explained that Mrs. Brimecombe's retirement was not announced to her staff until April 1st.

Chris Flanagan of Durham questioned the source of the \$470,000 for the athletic facilities in the bonding information.

Kate Farnsworth of Durham has a 2 yr old and a 3 yr old and is in support of all day k.

Rick Parmelee of Durham wants the salary information for all the administrators to be made public. He does not think they should have to ask for it each year. He does not support all day k. He is against activity fees, they have no place in the budget and should be outlawed in public education. He feels we have too many 4-wheeled drive vehicles and thinks the District should remit money back to the towns at the end of each year like the neighboring district does.

Joel Nick thanked the Board for the presentation and for their hard work. He is a parent of an incoming kindergartener and an educator. He suggested that people watch the video on the State Dept of Education website regarding Common Core to understand what will be changing in

education. He cautioned people who are trying to compare their kindergarten education with what is expected of the children now.

David Montgomery thanked the Board for the changes in the presentation. He asked what the projections are for costs going forward for all day kindergarten. Mrs. Viccaro explained that the cost would be the same as other grades unless there is a big influx of kids into the District. Mr. Montgomery would also like to know how much of the budget actually goes to the students in the classrooms.

Cindy Nick said that testing for the Common Core will be starting in the 2014-15 school year but the implementation actually began this year. It is the time to start all day kindergarten. The Common Core cannot be taught in a half day program. If we have to spend time modifying our curriculum for the Common Core for a half day program we will have to rewrite it again when all day kindergarten is mandated.

Karen Cheyney of Durham said there are ways that Durham residents are paying more for the school district. The District is not honoring contracts that they have agreed to and it is costing the Town of Durham attorney's fees, the District attorney's fees and her attorney's fees. She also encourages people to go out and vote.

Melinda Aronson Bailey is a teacher in the District and a Durham resident. She supports this budget. It is student centered and has good long-term plans.

Trisha Ledford has a child with special needs. The services of the special education department in this District have been amazing. She thanked them for all their hard work and all that they do.

Rick Handley of Durham feels this is a good budget. He is in favor of all day kindergarten and he commended the Board for their long range planning. He asked if the Board has considered participating in the health insurance pool through the State. Mrs. Mangini said she has been monitoring the plan but has some concerns. Mr. Handley asked if there was ever a line item for athletic field repair in the capital plan. Mrs. Flanagan said the capital plan was started at about the same time as athletic complex project. At this point there is only money being saved for track and turf field repairs and replacement. The other fields have not been discussed. Mr. Handley encouraged Mrs. Flanagan to add the natural fields to the capital plan as they have been over used for many years.

Oahn Stephan of Durham said she and her husband willingly spend over \$15,000 annually in extra expenses for her kids to participate in outside activities so that they will be able to compete internationally. This District needs to live up to its Mission Statement and provide all day kindergarten. It needs to be looked at as a necessity.

Sherry Furbush has three young girls. They moved to Durham from New Haven. Her oldest daughter attended all day kindergarten in New Haven and was ahead of her peers at school in Durham. She ended up sending her second child back to school in New Haven so that she could get the same advantage. Her youngest daughter is now going to attend a magnet preschool in New Haven. She wants the District to adopt all day kindergarten so they her daughter can return to the District for kindergarten.

Donia Viola spoke again. She does not feel that boys are ready for an all day program the same way that girls may be. They need more time to mature. She does not want it to be for babysitting.

Jeriyln Fleck said that all day kindergarten is about much more than babysitting. It upsets her to think that people would believe that.

Hearing no more questions, Mr. Hennick closed the hearing at 10:30pm.