

The Regional District 13 Board of Education held a public hearing on Wednesday, April 10, 2013 at 8:00 p.m. in the auditorium at Coginchaug High School. Board members present: Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Buckheit, Mrs. Flanagan, Mrs. Fronc, Mr. Fulton, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Renninghoff. Member absent: Mrs. Adams. Also present: Mr. Melnik, Mrs. Viccaro.

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

Mrs. Flanagan wished Mrs. Viccaro and Mr. Hauser well and commended them for their dedication to Regional School District 13. She also thanked the Central Office staff and the administrative team for the work they had done to pull the budget together. Mrs. Flanagan expressed that the budget reflects the Board's best estimate.

Mr. Hicks read the Call of the Meeting and the Return of the Call.

Mr. Hicks talked about the budget process for the District and shared important dates. He also read the Mission Statement stating that the Mission Statement is what drives our District. He reviewed the budget overview, explaining that budgeted receipts decreased by 6.9% due to a \$282,000 reduction in state funding for transportation.

Mrs. Buckheit discussed the town assessments and the drop in student enrollment. She explained that Durham's proportionate share will be decreasing due to a reduction in student population in Durham and that Middlefield's proportionate share will increase slightly. Mrs. Buckheit also reviewed the State Educational Cost Sharing funding for Durham and Middlefield.

Mrs. Flanagan reviewed the expenditures comparing SY 11-12 (actual), SY 12-13 (budget) and SY13-14 (BOE budget) stating that the total percent of change is 1.75%. Mrs. Flanagan further explained that there was a (.44%) change in salaries due to decreases in staff. Mrs. Flanagan reviewed each line item. Mrs. Flanagan presented a pie chart showing the relative weight of expenditures pointing out the percentage of fixed costs. Mrs. Flanagan went on to review a detail of estimated receipts again noting the decrease of \$282,257 due to the elimination of state funding for transportation.

Ms. Parsons discussed the District fund balance. She explained that \$1,028,425 has been reserved for the 2013-2014 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 2013. That money will be used for the following year's budget. Ms. Parsons explained the decrease in the salary account. The account is decreasing by \$89,693 or .44%. This number reflects 6 collective bargaining agreement wage changes and reductions in salary due to the retirement of staff. Ms. Parsons also reviewed staffing proposals and projected enrollments.

Mr. Fulton reviewed the union contract summary stating that salary increases over a three-year period have not increased over 5%. Mr. Fulton went on to explain that benefits account for 48% of the total budget increase. Although dental insurance and unemployment amounts have decreased there is a 30% increase in workers' compensation and health insurance has increased 9.4%. He also noted the cost of health insurance was limited due to the result of a competitive bid. Mr. Fulton noted that there is an overall increase of 4.8% in purchased services primarily due to collective bargaining and other contract renewal. Also included in this cost is the estimated cost of \$75,000 for a facilities utilization study and the District's cost for the installation of a traffic light at Pickett Lane and Main St. Mr. Fulton concluded by presenting the benefits of the facilities utilization study proposed due to the declining enrollment.

Dr. Ochterski reviewed property services that maintain our buildings and grounds, and re-implementing our bus routes to get students to school on time. He noted that there is a minimal increase of 2.0% in repairs and a reduction of one bus in our lease expense. On the topic of operating services Dr. Ochterski reported that there is an increase of 0.8% in transportation expense, an increase of \$162,000 in special education tuition expense, and an increase of 5% in property, auto and general liability insurance. One bus has been eliminated and there is a two-year savings of \$110,000 in transportation expense.

Mr. Renninghoff discussed the increase in the supplies budget due to implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Mr. Renninghoff however noted that there is a reduction of energy costs by use of solar, efficient lighting and conservation. Electricity (KWH) use has decreased over 10.7% over the last three years.

Mrs. Boyle reviewed the anticipated capital expenditures. Projects include funds for safety and security upgrades, flooring replacement at Brewster School, track, tennis court and turf field reserve fund, reserve for major building repairs and general building maintenance. The estimated budget cost is \$225,000. Mrs. Boyle also reviewed a bar graph reflecting a decrease in the debt payment schedule.

Mrs. Fronc stated that the 2013-2014 school budget includes the purchase of curricular materials to support the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. This budget also includes professional development for staff, the implementation of the revised Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Plan and support student assessment through Inform. Mrs. Fronc reviewed the proposed budget for Technology stating that the installation of Smartboards in all K-4 classrooms to be completed in 2013-2014 SY, the continued integration of Bring Your Own Device Initiative, and also expand tablet initiatives to Memorial and Strong. The technology budget also includes upgrade to network infrastructure and a technology infrastructure plan to be included in the facilities utilization study. Mrs. Fronc concluded the presentation by reviewing the major initiatives for the 2013-2014 school year. These initiatives include: Common Core State Standards, Literacy and Math Tutors, Implementation of

Technology Plan, Inform – Student Assessment System, Curriculum Revision and Unit Development, and Building Utilization Study.

Mrs. Flanagan commented that there was a lot of information presented in a short period of time. She then stated that the floor was opened to comments and questions.

Laura Francis, Durham thanked the Board for its hard work and willingness to collaborate with both towns. Mrs. Francis asked the Board if the budget passes with the utilization study in tact when would it be implemented and how long would it take? Mrs. Flanagan stated that it would begin over the summer and take approximately 6 to 9 months.

Marybeth Ellison, MD requested that the Board take a look at her data regarding special needs and autism. She stated that early and appropriate intervention is most important and that it is the prudent financial thing to do.

Pierce Stephan, a 5th grade student at Memorial School asked the Board to continue funding for technology in the classroom. Pierce stated that technology helps by providing opportunities to connect with people around the world.

Ellen Piotrowski of Durham asked what is percent of increase for fixed cost from last year. Mr. Melnik stated that it is 4% excluding salaries.

Becky Kalinowski of Middlefield spoke in support of Dr. Ellison. She also stated that it made financial sense to keep students requiring special education services in District. She stated that special education is targeted in budgets and not understood. She asked the Board to consider reinstating the .5 special education position. Mrs. Flanagan reported that Mrs. Emory did a wonderful job educating the Board on special services and stated that the District will provide services that are needed. Mrs. Flanagan also added that no one wants to reduce the quality of education to special ed students. Mrs. Kalinowski stated that Mrs. Flanagan's explanation was very clear and thanked the Board for the work they have done.

Joanne Badin of Middlefield spoke in support of Mrs. Michael and requested that the .2 science position at the high school be reconsidered. Lori St. Amand of Middlefield also spoke with Mrs. Badin in support of the .2 science position stating that we should go back to our Mission Statement and keep students engaged and not in study halls.

Beth Walker of Durham expressed a concern that the budget talks led to the departure of Mrs. Viccaro and Mr. Hauser and may lead to additional administrators leaving District 13. Mrs. Flanagan stated that there were no direct confrontations over budget. Mrs. Walker commended Mrs. Viccaro and Mr. Hauser for the work they have done in District 13.

Roger Kleeman of Durham asked if the \$282,000 was left in the budget where would it go.

Richard Parmelee of Durham thanked the Board for their work however stated that there needs to be a better way to fund education. He felt there is a tremendous amount of money being spent. He questioned why the budget was going up while the enrollment is going down. Mr. Parmelee would like to see the activity fees at the high school eliminated as they have no place in a public school system.

Ellen Piotrowski wanted clarification on her previous question regarding fixed cost. Mr. Melnik stated he would be in touch with her tomorrow and they could discuss her concern. Mrs. Piotrowski also thanked Mrs. Viccaro and Mr. Hauser for their work in the District.

Teresa Opalacz of Durham wanted to thank the Board for the great job they have done helping the public understand the budget. She also thanked Mrs. Viccaro for her dedication to the District and wished her well. Ms. Opalacz addressed the question of study halls and would like to see kids in the classroom. She also is in support of the utilization study.

Hearing no more questions, Mrs. Flanagan closed the hearing at 10:01 p.m.