

**Board of Education
Regional School District 13**

**Regular Meeting
Strong School, Library**

**March 5, 2014
Minutes & Motions**

The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Flanagan at 7:38 p.m. with the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call	Mrs. Flanagan	Dr. Onofreo	Mr. Renninghoff
	Mr. Hicks (arrived 9:03)	Mr. Fulton	Mrs. Buckheit
	Mrs. Boyle	Mrs. Fronc	
Absent:	Mrs. Adams	Dr. Friedrich	

Administrators Dr. Veronesi

BOF Durham	Mrs. Naples	Mrs. Coe	Mr. Anderson
	Mrs. Tuttle	Mrs. Nolan	Mrs. Larkin

BOF Middlefield	Mrs. Wolak	Mrs. Malcolm	Mrs. Petrella
	Mr. Irish	Mr. Yamartino	

Public Present There were 9 members of the public present.

Public Comment

Donia Viola asked if there are minutes for the February 19th workshop. Mrs. Flanagan said that because this was a Community Workshop not a Board of Education meeting there were no minutes taken.

Donia Viola also asked about the number of layoffs with the elimination of positions, percentage increase for TEMS, substitute salary lines, repetitive absences and taxpayers having a say.

Mrs. Flanagan said that we are waiting until the enrollment from the high school and the kindergarten registrations are complete before finalizing the staffing budget. There are no retirements anticipated this year. We will discuss the final staffing budget at the March 19th meeting.

Next Board Meeting

The next Board meeting will be March 12, 2014 at Strong School.

Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda made by Mr. Fulton, second by Mrs. Fronc . Vote: Unanimous.

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Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the amended Minutes dated February 26, 2014 Regular Meeting made by Dr. Onofreo, second by Mr. Fulton. Vote: Unanimous.

- Page Four, Old Business
Mrs. Buckheit clarified that she was not talking about RSD13, but as an example of a safety concern. She was using the recent issue of a student going home in another district with a wrong grandparent.
- Page One, Public Comment
Mr. Renninghoff questioned whether “Jennifer DiMartinez” name was correct. He thought it was “Wells-DiMartino”. Dr. Veronesi will confirm.
- Page Three
Mr. Fulton clarified that in his comment about the Chrome Books, the roll out will start 2013-2014 subject to budget approval, in grade 9.

Communications

Mrs. Flanagan reported that she read at Lyman School and Brewster School for “Read Across America”. She said that the students were amazing and she asked them questions and they answered quickly and accurately. She also said that she and Dr. Veronesi met with the Middlesex Transition Academy at Wesleyan to see what the older students are doing to prepare for the future. Today they were working on power points and were baking monkey bread. They work hard and are making tremendous progress. Wesleyan students buddy up with these students and they volunteer time and have lunch with them. This is a fabulous program with a lot of interest from other towns.

Mrs. Buckheit confirmed that the Meet and Greet with Dr. Veronesi that is being sponsored by the Durham Women’s Club will be on April 3rd at Perk on Main.

Mrs. Flanagan said that this is a great opportunity for people to have one on one conversation with Dr. Veronesi.

Budget Discussion with the Boards of Finance from Durham and Middlefield

Mr. Anderson asked if the salary of the principal was built into this budget, and why such big differences between excess cost and transportation.

Mr. Fulton clarified that the state did a reclassification of the reporting of the grants. There is no loss/gain of funds, but they are reporting in a more appropriate manner.

Mrs. Flanagan confirmed that the principal is built in at .51% increase, but that this is a guess. We are hoping to have the new principal hired by May.

Mrs. Coe asked about the ECS money.

Mrs. Flanagan said that the number in the budget is a guess. We don’t get the final figures until May. She did confirm that this is flat funding and that there should not be a significant change.

Mrs. Tuttle questioned why with teacher reductions there is still an increase in the salary lines.

Mrs. Flanagan said that the employee unions have negotiated increases in salaries which are reflected in the budget for salaries. There are 199 teachers, but we still have pending negotiations for cafeteria, custodians and nurses. The overall salary increases are approximately 2.5% without the teacher reductions.

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Mr. Yamartino said he has looked at the audited financial statements for the past few years and there is always excess in the salary lines. He asked why the full salaries are used in the budget process.

Mr. Fulton responded that Mr. Melnik gave us a comparison for the last three years. Salaries, ECS, snow removal, benefits, special education costs, etc. are not certain numbers and are put in as a best guess estimate.

Mr. Yamartino expressed that there is always a surplus of \$300,000 to \$500,000. He said that it is a concern because it affects the mil rate ($\$300,000. = \frac{3}{4} \%$).

Mrs. Flanagan confirmed that the BOE used to do averages for salaries, but that we have been advised by the lawyer that we need to budget for 100% of salaries, not knowing if anyone will be out or not. We are bringing the fund balance down and do not have wiggle room. We base salaries on what we know at the time. With the changes in education, we have to provide professional development to the teachers. We pay them for the professional development time and we also pay the substitute.

Mr. Yamartino said that part of his concern is that there is no check and balance in how the extra in the line item is spent. The administrators will have the control instead of the BOE. What do you think you really need in the cash flow to run the operation?

Mrs. Flanagan said that the management of cash flow between the towns and the BOE is a concern. \$300,000 is very tight. We have spent over five years putting safeguards in place to make sure that the money is not being spent where we don't know.

Mr. Fulton said that the BOE talks with the towns to minimize surprises.

Mr. Yamartino said he is aware of the problems from the past but that Middlefield should continue to pay on time. If you are in a shortfall, we can call a town meeting. You are budgeting responsibly.

Mrs. Flanagan reiterated that the BOE has spent a lot of time trying to look at the salary line and substitute line, but we can look at it again to see if we can get it down more. This is a very realistic budget.

Dr. Veronesi again expressed that the lawyer has told us to budget 100% for salaries.

Mr. Yamartino also made the BOE aware that there may be an opportunity to get a better percentage on a bank note vs. bonding. The wording on the referendum is key in determining if you can get a bank note. You may want to research past referendum wording and may want to add a question to the upcoming budget referendum about being able to obtain bank notes for a lower percentage. Closing costs are also lower.

Mrs. Flanagan thanked Mr. Yamartino for the suggestion and agreed that the Board should look into it. She also noted that the whole capital plan will change depending on the report from DRA that they give us regarding the utilization study.

Donia Viola said that continuity for the students is important and with substitutes coming in to replace teachers that have left is not good. The substitutes are not as familiar with the school and they don't form relationships with the students.

Mrs. Flanagan confirmed that these substitutes are hand-picked and certified. They don't have a permanent position but we have kept them for the remainder of the school year. These are well known to the district. We decided not to hire "cold" teachers, but keep the substitute for the remainder of the year knowing that we would have a reduction in staff.

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Mr. Irish asked about the curriculum budget, professional development budget, technology budget and contract negotiations.

Mrs. Flanagan said that the curriculum and professional development budgets are in different lines within the budget.

Dr. Veronesi said that the teacher contract was just negotiated. There is a summary in the BOE Minutes dated February 12, 2014. The budget for curriculum, professional development and technology are within the building budgets.

Mrs. Flanagan did confirm that the district is in the 5th year of a 5-year technology plan. Every year we replace 1/5 of the hardware. Are we where we need to be? No. We have Chrome Books coming in for Grade 9 this coming year depending on budget approval.

Mr. Fulton said that the Education Resource Committee talked about coordination with the IT Department and curriculum people for the need and use of technology. As we proceed with the utilization study, we need to look at the buildings and see what they need to be equipped with.

Mrs. Fronc confirmed that we are ready to go with SBAC testing. The technology is in place for this.

The cost per pupil in RESD13 is approximately \$16,000. Information is available online.

Mrs. Flanagan said that we are struggling with cost per pupil. We need to use the buildings as efficiently as possible. Enrollment is down. We will need help from both towns. Can we deliver a better school system with fewer buildings? Everyone needs to have an open mind. We need to spend the money on programs, not on the actual space. We have to do things better, but we have to do it in a fiscally responsible way. I don't believe we can do the best for the students and keep all of the buildings open.

Mr. Hicks arrived.

Mrs. Boyle reminded everyone that this is not going to happen overnight. There is nothing in the budget for 2014-2015 regarding the utilization study.

Mrs. Coe said that she values the school system.

Mrs. Flanagan said that we need to applaud the staff and administration.

Mrs. Fronc said that we need to figure out what we have, change what we can and realign with the times.

Mrs. Naples said that she is very impressed with what the BOE has come to. We have not gotten information like this in a long time.

Mr. Yamartino asked what the towns could do at the state level. We should have these discussions more often so that we can help the BOE.

Mr. Fulton agreed that we should work together.

Mr. Yamartino said that we could have more voices than other towns if we work together. The BOF in Middlefield wants to endorse the BOE budget. Communication is much better.

Mrs. Flanagan thanked all of the members for coming this year. This BOE has been working together for a long time. If the budget goes through, we will be a member of CABA. We cannot continue to absorb all of the unfunded mandates. We will have more of a voice with CABA membership. There are many services and professional development opportunities included with membership. We want to keep the towns more updated. We all want a good education system, but don't want the taxes.

Mrs. Boyle reminded everyone that we have put CABA in the budget every year. That is always cut first. It is time and we need the membership. It will be beneficial.

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Mrs. Flanagan said that there is a list of projects for Capital but we don't have definite plans for 2014-2015 because we need to look at the utilization study. We will freeze where we are and only deal with emergencies until more decisions are made about the buildings.

Public Comment

Donia Viola thanked the BOF from both towns for attending. Budgets are difficult. She questioned why anything is being put in the budget for capital if you are waiting for the utilization study and report. She said that there are no comparisons with tests anymore because they keep changing and reminded everyone that we all need to use cursive writing so we should go back to teaching the basics.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 9:30 p.m. made by Mr. Hicks, second by Mr. Fulton. Vote: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,



Tammy A. McPherson
Regional District 13
BOE Recording Secretary