

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Utilization Committee met in Regular Session on September 25, 2018 at 6:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, Durham, Connecticut. Committee members present: Mr. Augur, Mr. Moore, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino (arrived at 6:45 PM).

Committee members absent: Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci and Mr. Hicks

Other Board members present: None

Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. Neubig, Business Manager

Dr. Taylor called the meeting to order.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Approval of Agenda**

*Mr. Augur made a motion to approve to the agenda, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the agenda, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mr. Augur, Mr. Moore and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.*

### **Approval of Minutes - July 2, 2018**

*Mr. Augur made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the minutes of July 2, 2018, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of July 2, 2018, as presented: Mr. Augur, Mr. Moore and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.*

### **Korn School Building Update/MOU**

Dr. Veronesi emailed a copy of the MOU and also had paper copies available. Both attorneys have made final edits on the MOU and it will go to the Board of Selectmen on October 1<sup>st</sup> and they will vote to send it on to the Board of Finance who will meet on October 16<sup>th</sup>. The Board of Finance will then vote to go to town meeting on October 29<sup>th</sup> where there will be a vote to hold a referendum on December 4<sup>th</sup>. The Durham Registrar of Voters contacted Dr. Veronesi and confirmed that they are planning for the referendum on December 4<sup>th</sup>. She also spoke to Laura Francis today and was told that the amount being presented to the public is \$7.1 million (\$7 million for the project and \$100,000 for bonding requirements).

Once the MOU and the definitive agreement are signed, there are 90 days to do what is necessary for the five-acre Tuttle Road property during the due diligence period. Dr. Veronesi asked that any questions be sent to her and she will then contact Attorney Doug Gillette. Mr. Moore pointed out that the amount owed to Middlefield will be updated.

Dr. Taylor asked about a definitive endpoint for Durham if it doesn't pass the referendum in December. He would like for there to be a definitive break in the agreement if it fails referendum. Dr. Veronesi spoke to Attorney Gillette about that and he suggested that the end date or any disposition of the building would be included in the definitive agreement rather than the MOU.

Carl Stoup explained that he believed this would be a one-shot deal and if it doesn't pass referendum, the building would no longer be available. Mr. Augur asked if the town would actually send a number to referendum that they know would fail. Mr. Stoup stated that he always tries to keep the money amount down. Dr. Taylor asked if the dollar amount would be modifiable during the town meeting and Mr. Stoup was not sure. Mr. Moore felt that once they are within a certain time period, the number can no longer be changed.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned that some people have asked if the Board of Education will have a public stand on the referendum. Mr. Augur mentioned that the Board should have a public stand on what will happen if it is voted down. Dr. Taylor felt that the Board should remain neutral on the referendum. Mr. Moore reviewed that the Board's position has been for the town to take ownership of Korn School, but the dollar amount is a different issue. There was also some discussion about how the Board would pay for the demolition, if that became necessary. Mr. Moore reminded everyone that they would also have to pay the state the outstanding debt, but Mrs. Neubig stated that that debt has been forgiven through special legislation.

### **Safety and Security Strategic Improvement Plan**

Dr. Veronesi reported that significant progress has been made on everything that was identified last year, including adding necessary signage to the exterior of the Cuginchaug campus, enhancing internal and external surveillance at all schools, the exterior numbering system, staffing to support safety and security, improving operations and protocols, incident management training, basic protocol training, revising the District's safety and security plan, looking at the audit of tiered support in the mental health area and exploring the partnership for social/emotional learning with CCSU.

Silver Petrucelli visited to review the vestibules and hopes to have a quote available in a few weeks. There will be a professional development session next Friday with front office staff to review all building entry protocols. They are also planning to create an in-house, one-page graphic that will be in every room with instructions about what to do in the event of an incident. Mr. Augur also mentioned that you can now text 911 if you are unable to talk.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned that working with CCSU didn't necessarily align with the practical setting in the schools. This will continue with a small cadre of the well-being committee and Scott Rossignol will give a presentation to the Board in November regarding our system of support and education for mental health and social emotional learning.

Dr. Veronesi also reported that the window film is still an outstanding item as well. Mrs. Neubig reminded everyone that the Board had allocated \$400,000 to safety and security and the only money encumbered to this point would be for the SRO.

Mr. Moore also mentioned that there was no control at the door of John Lyman School during their assembly and someone from the public mentioned that it is like that at pick-up time also. Mr. Moore stated that pick-up at Brewster is much more controlled. There was some discussion about passes or ID cards to allow people into Lyman. Dr. Veronesi agreed to add assembly entry protocols and parent pick-up to the list.

### **Review of Community Engagement Session Feedback**

Dr. Veronesi asked the committee members what they would like to do with the feedback next and suggested that some of the key topics be addressed in the next Community Newsletter. Mr. Moore felt that the top 20 or 30 could be highlighted. Dr. Veronesi reviewed several of the items and felt that the necessary capital improvements should also be mentioned when talking about the various buildings. She also mentioned the mill rate and impact on taxes and stated that the Finance Committee wanted to work on that part of the project.

Dr. Veronesi also thought some research should be done on transitions. Dr. Taylor stated that he heard that a bus study had been done in the past and asked if the Board could see those results, but Dr. Veronesi stated that that was a long time ago. Mrs. Neubig stated that Phil Johnson, VP of DATTCO, did look at the data and he felt that the district would not reduce any buses without extending ride times. Mr. Augur asked what the district's penetration rate is on the buses and if they are mostly medium-sized buses. Mrs. Neubig stated that there needs to be a seat for every student, but parents could voluntarily opt out. In the past, parents have been reluctant to opt out.

Dr. Veronesi reviewed that she had highlighted some key areas from the community engagement session that she feels should be addressed in the newsletter. Dr. Taylor had the general impression that people are just waiting to see what the recommendation is and that there will be more specific details at that point. Mr. Moore agreed that he too felt that people were waiting to see what will be proposed and what the programs will look like.

Dr. Veronesi mentioned that the Strategic Visioning Committee will meet one more time in October as they have made the decision to allow for parent feedback before coming to a final decision. She also agreed that the public wants to provide feedback on a final decision. After that meeting, Dr. Veronesi will create a final proposal to present to the Board of Education in November.

### **Community Newsletter Plan**

Dr. Veronesi asked if there was anything else that the committee members felt should be included in the newsletter. Mr. Moore felt that the student feedback should be included as a separate item under community engagement. Dr. Veronesi would like to have the newsletter ready in the next week to week-and-a-half. They will also try to include broader issues, including the SRO, SBAC scores and other highlights.

### **Utilization Timeline**

Dr. Veronesi reviewed that they will be doing an SCG (construction grant) submission by next June, but that would mean a referendum in May. Mr. Moore felt that the Board would need to be very clear about the impact of the grant on the budget and the importance of showing what the impact on taxes would be. Dr. Taylor agreed and hoped that the Finance Committee would provide a summary document that could be disseminated to the public. Dr. Veronesi reminded everyone that the people in Durham will still be feeling the impact of the Korn School referendum, should that pass.

Mrs. Neubig explained that, when considering potential projects at Memorial, consideration needs to be given to the fact that Memorial has a lot of critical systems at the end of their life span. It would be prudent to bundle those together with any construction that were to happen. Those critical systems would cost approximately \$2.8 million. It would be feasible to do the construction and complete most of Memorial's critical systems at the same time.

When looking at how the debt service would remain in relation to the operating savings of closing Lyman (estimated to be about \$925,000 a year), Mrs. Neubig showed the debt as it exists currently plus the two options that IBIC had presented. She had prepared a graph, with the red showing the \$2.8 million and the green showing the \$6.57 million. Starting in 2022, the \$925,000 yearly savings comes into play and is higher than either borrowing option.

Dr. Taylor worries about sticker shock and would want to maximize the opportunity for whatever option is chosen to pass. He felt that it may be easier to come back a year or two later for money for some of the critical systems. Mrs. Neubig noted that the Finance Committee had put together a draft to show taxpayers what it would look like, including operating savings as well as the cost avoidance of capital improvements.

Dr. Veronesi felt that the story needed to be told in the context of the impact on the total budget which includes the cost avoidance and savings from Lyman. Mrs. Neubig pointed out that there would actually be a favorable impact on the budget and taxes. Dr. Veronesi also felt it would be prudent to more publicly talk about the district's capital responsibilities and that neglecting them is really irresponsible and costly.

Mr. Yamartino committed to putting the capital plan into his level-funding program before the next ERC meeting and reviewed how that program works for the committee members. He also commented that capital has been clearly under-funded and needs to be \$1 to \$2 million per year.

Dr. Veronesi also explained that they have told the facilities people to make sure they let the administration know how bad it is so that there are no surprises.

Dr. Taylor asked how Mr. Yamartino ensures that the capital plan is funded and Mr. Yamartino explained that once something is allocated in the capital plan, it can only be spent on the specific line item it has been allocated to. The only way to move things between line items is at a town meeting. Unfortunately, there is no procedure for that at the Board of Education. Dr. Veronesi suggested that the Board creates a policy to support those priorities.

Mr. Yamartino would also like to see a policy that prohibits a transfer of a certain amount from one line item or department to another without Board approval. Mr. Augur didn't see how that could be applied at the school level.

### **Public Comment**

Missy Booth, from Durham, asked if the committee was really going to consider doing the vestibule at Lyman if they are thinking about closing the school in two years. She also commented that Heidi Pizzo, from Brewster, felt that parking and a better bus entrance needs to be added at Brewster if Lyman is closed. Mrs. Pizzo feels that parking is chaos at Brewster.

Theresa Weimann, from Durham, was going to thank the Board last week for their efforts to make the Community Engagement Session so transparent, but she was very disappointed when the whole conversation was based on the students only. The programs are important to the district as well and she would like to see that discussed more. She is thankful that Dr. Veronesi feels that the capital needs to be addressed with the public and hopes that they are done appropriately. She would like to know why the urgent needs at Brewster aren't talked about very much. Mrs. Weimann also noticed that Lyman's repairs have already been appropriated in the budget and most people have no idea that that is the case. She felt that most people also had no idea that the \$2 million proposal for Option A means that Brewster students would still be in portables with nothing happening at the other schools. She asked about the parcel of

land on Cherry Hill Road that the distinct owns and wondered that could be sold and the money could be put back into the schools.

A gentleman asked to see the review of the feedback that had been received and Dr. Veronesi stated that it was online, but had an extra copy for him.

Teresa Opalacz, from Durham, also commented on how money is transferred within the district's budget and felt that there are arguments about small line items, with big decisions made elsewhere. She also commented that she was shocked with the results of the prior bus study and that it wasn't going to save money and suggested that the district push back on that. Mrs. Opalacz also assumed that the district has reached out to other school districts regarding security concerns and how they handle those situations.

Carl Stoup heard that there was a group in Durham that will be pushing to vote down Korn School because they are afraid it will take money away from the education budget. Dr. Veronesi agreed to include that sort of information in the newsletter.

Missy Booth felt that the referendum for Korn School could not be put out for less money as they would not be being completely honest with the citizens of Durham and giving them the most accurate proposal.

Teresa Opalacz also suggested that it be mentioned in the communication that Korn will also have activities for the kids in the community center. Mr. Stoup explained that the final report is out and there is quite a list of possible uses.

There were some comments made about senior activities and adult education being held in the Korn School building. Mr. Stoup reiterated that it will be a community center, not a senior center. Theresa Weimann also mentioned that that may help the students who want to be together rather than in separate programs. It was also noted that the kitchen could be used for fund-raising dinners. It can also hopefully be used for after-school programs.

Teresa Opalacz summarized that they don't want to sell it as a senior center and lose out on the other votes.

### **Adjournment**

*Mr. Augur made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to adjourn the meeting.*

*In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Augur, Mr. Moore, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
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