

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Utilization Committee met in special session on January 9, 2019 at 6:30 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, Durham, Connecticut.

Committee members present: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino

Committee members absent: None

Other Board members present: Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mrs. Caramanella

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

The meeting began at 6 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes - November 29, 2018

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve to the minutes of November 29, 2018, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of November 29, 2018, as presented: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.

Discuss Grade Configuration Survey and Discuss Configuration Recommendation to Full Board

Mr. Augur explained that everyone should have received a copy of the summary of the latest survey and opened the meeting for discussion.

Mrs. Petrella did not have time to read all of the comments, but was a bit surprised that Option A (preK-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12) came in higher than the other option. She had thought that that many transitions would not be as conducive to the HOT school model. She felt that everyone would be leaning more towards the K-5 to keep older kids in school with the younger kids. However, that would bring up the issue of Durham vs. Middlefield, rather than ID vs. Contemporary. She also noted that the students had asked about being together and that wouldn't happen until grade 6. Mrs. Petrella felt that she was not ready to make a decision and would need more time to look at the pros and cons of both options. She suggested that the Board spend some time during their retreat to pour over this information in detail before coming to a decision.

Mr. Yamartino read through all of the information and didn't really find anything surprising. He felt that the towns were leaning toward a single track. He did not feel that the four transitions that each of his children had before high school was deleterious to their education.

Mr. Hicks stated that he read all of the comments and felt that he was willing to make a decision this evening. He felt that the results of the survey are clear.

Dr. Friedrich felt that it is an enormously complicated decision and noted that this has been going on for all six years that he has been on the Board. He felt that the process has been slow, but it is now time to make a decision.

Mrs. Geraci mentioned the November meeting when there was quite a bit of public comment from parents asking the Board not to slow down any more. She, too, felt that it was time to take a vote and move forward.

Mrs. Caramanello stated that she also read all of the comments and agreed that parents are wanting the Board to make a decision.

Dr. Taylor felt that the bigger decision was to move to a single program option and he felt that a lot of people do want to keep the HOT program and choice, but then ultimately voted for track A. He believes that people were not in favor of having a regional system nor is he. He felt that the best option would be to maintain the choice aspect, but to increase efficiency as well.

Mr. Augur stated that the overall comment rate was about 1:6, but others let their feelings be known through their vote.

Mrs. Petrella asked what this vote would mean about Lyman School and if this were to be a positive vote, would that mean Lyman School would be closed. Mr. Augur confirmed that. Mrs. Petrella felt that that was not clear in the motion. Mrs. Petrella also noted that she is feeling positive about Connecticut and has heard about Pratt & Whitney hiring more people. If the economy continues to improve, what will happen if the District closes the school and there are more kids.

Mr. Augur hoped that Mrs. Petrella's optimism was well-placed but they have to make a decision based on the facts they have now. Dr. Taylor also commented that this was designed to create the best efficiencies that they can, given the current climate, and if things change, revisions can be made.

Mr. Augur also explained that his children went through five transitions and they enjoyed them. Mr. Moore also reminded everyone that this would still be two years away from any construction actually happening. Mrs. Geraci stated that this is not unique to Durham and Middlefield and is something that's happening across the state.

Dr. Veronesi stated that the enrollment projections show that enrollment wouldn't increase in such a way that the best decision would be to reopen a school. It would more than likely be gradual and inconsistently distributed over grades. That would probably mean an addition to an existing school building rather than reopening a previously closed building.

Mrs. Petrella felt that it would be most fiscally efficient to have everything on one campus, but what would that do to Middlefield which would be left with no schools at all. She noted two articles that she

read about the closing of Haddam Elementary School. Mrs. Petrella feels that John Lyman is an important building for the identity of the town.

Mr. Hicks made a recommendation, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, that the Utilization Committee endorses Option A and brings it to the full Board at their meeting.

Mr. Yamartino clarified the voting members of the Utilization Committee.

In favor of recommending that the Utilization Committee endorses Option A and brings it to the full Board at their meeting: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed, with Dr. Taylor abstaining.

Public Comment

Missy Booth, from Durham, stated that she agreed with pretty much everything that Dr. Taylor said. Six months ago, she would have voted for two K-5 schools but that is not how she responded to the survey. She voted that way because the Board had decided to go to one program and did not want the children separated by geography.

Theresa Weimann, from Durham, felt that the survey said that all schools will be utilized, but Strong and Coginchaug will remain the same and she felt that that is a very misleading statement. She also read through the Facilities Restacking Study and noticed that none of the recommendations bring any of the buildings up to state standards. She commented that it took the Board two years to not get Korn to go through and they were supposed to go back to square one and did absolutely nothing. As far as the comments made in November, she stated that parents are fed up and want this to get moving but also felt that it was not the towns' majority.

Carl Stoup, from Durham, thanked the Committee and the Board for their hard work and due diligence to reach this point.

Adjournment

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting ended at 6:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

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