

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Finance Committee met in special session on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 at 5:00 PM via Zoom.

Committee members present: Mr. Armstrong, Ms. Benson, Mr. Faiella, Mr. Martinelli, Ms. Opalacz and Mr. Stone

Administration present: Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance, and Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools

Committee members absent: Mr. Neidhardt

Board members present: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore and Mrs. Petrella

Mr. Stone called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Stone explained that they will need to table item 5, Board of Finance Reports.

*Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Faiella, to table item 5, Board of Finance Reports.*

*In favor of tabling item 5, Board of Finance Reports: Mr. Armstrong, Ms. Benson, Mr. Faiella, Mr. Martinelli, Ms. Opalacz and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

### **Approval of Minutes - December 6, 2023**

*Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Opalacz, to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2023 meeting, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the December 6, 2023 meeting, as presented: Mr. Armstrong, Ms. Benson, Mr. Faiella, Mr. Martinelli, Ms. Opalacz and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

**Review budget meeting dates and process**

Mrs. Dahlheimer sent the district's budget meeting dates out to the committee members and explained that they may call a special meeting to get Finance committee input. Mrs. Petrella reviewed the calendar and noted that there were no work sessions listed and Mrs. Dahlheimer explained that she will send those dates out as well. Mrs. Dahlheimer explained that the board would like to see the Finance committee look at the larger money issues and give them direction. Mr. Faiella felt that they really can't comment until the budget is presented, but hoped that the Finance committee could send their thoughts and ideas to the Board of Education. Mrs. Dahlheimer would like to be able to lean on the Finance committee for help during the budget process, but also during different times of the year. Ms. Opalacz noted that she hasn't understood what the role of the Finance committee is and she would like to be sure they are doing their job and more meetings and direction would be helpful. Mr. Faiella felt it would be helpful for the Finance committee to evaluate the budget and be able to submit questions.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked Mr. Stone to reach out to both First Selectmen to have a representative attend the first meeting after the budget has been presented so that the district is aware of any big projects in the towns. Mr. Stone also encouraged the committee members to attend the February 7<sup>th</sup> Board of Education meeting when the budget will be presented. Mrs. Dahlheimer will also send a copy of the budget to the Finance committee members once it has been presented.

Mrs. Dahlheimer stated that they will also have a Google Doc available for Finance committee members to submit questions and concerns. Dr. Schuch was fine with whatever the group wants, especially if the board is comfortable with that. He felt it may be helpful to have the questions from the Finance committee streamlined into the questions from the Board. Mrs. Dahlheimer suggested having it be a joint document and will bring that up to the full board. Mr. Moore noted that the Finance committee has been asked for specific information and advice in the past.

**Review long range facility planning**

Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that she added this item to the agenda so that the Finance committee is up to date. She explained that community forums are scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday. She encouraged the committee members to attend the forums, if possible. They will review the three different options.

After the community forums, they would like to select a final option and present for a referendum in the Spring. The state grant application needs to be in by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Neubig explained that the architects also need to do some cost estimates before that deadline. Mrs. Dahlheimer would like to have a few meetings with the Finance committee to go over the financial impact of the different options.

Ms. Opalacz asked what they were trying to get out of the community forums and Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that community participation is the end goal because those are the taxpayers that will be voting. The board will be okay with hard questions and will try to provide the hard answers. The architects, Mrs. Neubig and Dr. Schuch will also be available to answer any questions. She noted that the board needs to know what the public wants. Ms. Opalacz felt that there were a lot of options and asked if they were going to narrow that down to one or two to present. Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that they are now down to three options, five buildings, four buildings and three buildings. They are aware that there are pros and cons to each of the options. Mr. Moore felt that the proposed format will glean the most information possible.

Mr. Faiella felt that there are a lot of opinions about the number of schools, but this may be the first meeting where they can evaluate the costs associated with the options. Just about 88 people have signed up for the two forums and they expect a few more. Ms. Opalacz asked about the demographics and Mrs. Dahlheimer felt it was a good cross section, from age to involvement to parents. She felt it was mostly elementary school parents and would've liked more involvement from the taxpayers who aren't involved in the schools. Ms. Benson asked to confirm the options being 4, 10 and 11 and Mrs. Dahlheimer explained that they changed the numbering and now refer to how many schools are included in each option.

Dr. Schuch added that they are trying to put themselves in the place of people who don't have many details. He hoped to find out which option has the most support and get some written comments/concerns to help guide the district moving forward. Mr. Moore also felt that this will be the first time that people see that doing nothing will have a significant cost as well. Ms. Opalacz felt that it will be key to have townspeople there that are concerned about the costs rather than the schools they fell in love with. Ms. Opalacz will attend Wednesday's forum and Mr. Armstrong noted that he is going to try to go both days. Mr. Martinelli will also attend Wednesday's forum.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Adjournment**

*Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Opalacz, to adjourn the meeting.*

*In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Armstrong, Ms. Benson, Mr. Faiella, Mr. Martinelli, Ms. Opalacz and Mr. Stone. Motion carried unanimously.*

The meeting was adjourned at 5:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First