

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, November 8, 2017 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut.

Board members present: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.

Board members absent: Mr. Hicks.

Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Neubig, Business Manager and Mr. Scott Sadinsky, Principal, Strong Middle School.

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Administrator's Welcome – Nancy Heckler

The recording began with Mrs. Heckler presenting about what's being done at Brewster School. They decided last year that every team would do a STEAM project, lesson or task at least once a month. The preschool program added the STEAM component this year. The K, 2 and 3 levels have added a Makerspace program which encourages invention and design.

Mrs. Heckler also explained that they are doing a math workshop where students participate in stations and it recently included a segment on geometry, even at the kindergarten level. Another area that is new at Brewster is the NGSS standards and second grade just began with a unit on matter. They students made a blueprint for a house based on the matter that was in their bags.

Mrs. Heckler invited the Board members to stop by and visit Brewster at any time.

CRHS Reporters - Colleen Coogan, Demarie Del Vecchio, Daniel Turecek

Colleen Coogan reported that girls' volleyball just won their game in the state tournament. Unfortunately, the boys' team just lost in the states today. The Coginchaug football team will be playing their first ever night game under the lights on November 10th and admission will be free for veterans. It is also senior night. She also reported that the annual Powder Puff football game is Wednesday, November 22 at 1:00 PM. The girls' soccer team was awarded the 2017 Shoreline Sportsmanship award this year, even with a low record of wins. Today, two athletes from Coginchaug signed National Letter of Intent, to Bryant University and Assumption College, both for baseball.

Demarie Del Vecchio reported that the seniors are excited to go to Washington, DC next week.

Daniel Turecek gave some of the highlights of the DC trip, including a stop at Camden Yards in Baltimore and the National Air and Space Museum. He reported that they will visit the Vietnam, Lincoln and Korean War memorials as well as Capitol Hill buildings. They will visit Arlington National Cemetery and will stop at the National Zoo.

Public Comment

None.

Next Board Meeting - December 13, 2017 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School

Approval of Agenda

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

Mrs. Boyle asked if they could add a discussion regarding the STEAM coordinator position, but Dr. Veronesi will cover that issue in her Superintendent's report.

In favor of approving the agenda as presented: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Approval of Minutes - October 11, 2017

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the minutes of Board of Education meeting on October 11, 2017, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of October 11, 2017 as presented: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Mrs. Boyle abstained. Motion carried.

Communications

Mr. Moore reported that he received an email from Nick Faiella about the football game on Friday night and his concern about some of the fees. He also requested that the ERC begin talking about bathrooms once again.

Mrs. Petrella mentioned that a letter has been received about snow days with some suggestions. She did not like the idea of taking days away from April vacation and preferred to add days at the end of school year, if needed. Dr. Veronesi stated that she responded to the letter and explained that the Board would discuss the calendar at their December meeting. She also looked back at prior calendars and found that up until 1999, the calendar had 180 days and the Board made a decision to add two additional days at that time. The District had 182 days until 2002 when they went to 181 days for several years. In 2010/2011, it was reduced to 180 days due to eight snow days. Mrs. Boyle also thought that teachers should be able to plan for April vacation as well.

Mrs. Boyle also commented that she's had three people reach out regarding the Town Times article regarding the STEAM coordinator position. Dr. Veronesi thought that the Town Times article left out some important information. She reminded the Board that two tech integration specialist positions had been created years ago and one of them was eliminated this year in the budget process in favor of a math coach. The other tech specialist decided to take the available English teacher position. Dr. Veronesi explained that that was where that position came from and it was not an additional position. Mrs. Boyle felt that the Board should get these types of updates on a monthly basis so they can understand and explain these issues to their constituents. Several members of the Board would like to see that information though did not feel names would be necessary. Dr. Veronesi reminded the Board that information on the title change had been shared in an update this summer. Dr. Taylor asked why the Board would want to see information on a monthly basis that is not actionable anyway. He felt that a summary report before budget discussion begins would be adequate. Dr. Friedrich felt that he could not judge whether the information would have an impact until he sees the information.

Dr. Veronesi will share the information from July to December with a breakdown by FTE and by school. Mrs. Boyle stated that she has been on the HR committee for 10 years and has seen many different examples where this information would have been beneficial to the Board. Dr. Taylor did not want someone spending a lot of time preparing this report every month. He also questioned the value of the student enrollment report every month.

Mr. Moore commented that the HR Committee will meet and he and Mrs. Boyle will decide how to best present this information.

Business Manager's Report

Mrs. Neubig reviewed that the District had had a soft freeze on any non-educational expenses and has ended October being under budget by \$146,000. The revenue and expense information is in the Board's packets.

Mrs. Neubig prepared a table with numbers off the state budget and ECS funding was cut by 5 percent across the board. She compared the amounts to be received by each town, stating the Durham has a reduction of

\$194,000 and Middlefield has been reduced by \$104,000. For 2018/2019, the ECS formula will be recalculated and Durham will be further reduced to \$274,000 and Middlefield will get \$1,300 more. Durham's two-year total is down 12.5 percent and Middlefield is down 5 percent over two years.

The Excess Cost grant has been approved and the result is that Region 13 will be getting \$5,200 more than expected. For FY 2018/2019, that will be a bit less. Teachers' contributions to their pension will rise by 1 percent beginning January 1, 2018. Minimum budget requirements have been extended through FY 2019.

As far as District 13's budget, Mrs. Neubig mailed letters to both towns with the allocations and student breakdowns. Durham is at 65.76 percent with 1,110 students and Middlefield is at 34.24 percent with 578 students. Administrator budget packets are due back to the Business Office in early December.

Mrs. Neubig asked the Board to consider the option of funding the debt service that will experience in 2018/2019 to support Utilization's mission going forward. She explained that \$380,000 will fall off because a note has been paid off.

The audit report was received late yesterday and she will review that with the auditors. It will be presented to the ERC on December 13 and the full Board after that for approval. Mrs. Neubig also mentioned that Morgan Stanley will be coming to the ERC meeting for a presentation that night as well, but it was suggested to hold them off until January.

Mrs. Neubig also reported that some fences came down during the storm on October 30, but they were fixed the next day and cost \$2,500. She also reported that she is researching some energy savings opportunities and hopes to have updates for the next Board meeting.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Veronesi reported that she received an email from MMI today and there is \$5,000 in the budget to update enrollment projections. Because the projection is only off by three students, they felt that we're in good shape and did not need to update at this time.

There is a Policy Committee meeting next Tuesday and updates have been sent out to committee members.

The District hosted the Second Mental Health Summit which was attended by just under 80 people from the Consortium area with a focus on childhood trauma, depression and anxiety. They also hosted the Visual Thinking Skills professional development for art teachers and that too was outstanding.

Dr. Veronesi reviewed that the first STEAM camp held last month was very successful and 66 children participated. Student feedback was very positive and they are looking forward the next camp which will be held on December 6. The fee was \$30/student and there is now \$1,500 to invest into the program and hopefully a STEAM camp in the summer.

A. Review of Strategic Coherence Plan and Mission Statement

Dr. Veronesi commented that the Board members have this information in their packet and reviewed that the group had started working on the Strategic Coherence Plan last September and ended in May. She reviewed the four focus areas: goals for learning, teaching for learning, assessment for learning and systemic coherence. They gathered data and did an analysis of what needed to be worked on to move the district forward.

One of the first steps was to revisit the mission statement and a much shorter, more concise mission statement was created. Dr. Veronesi stressed that children should be learning things that matter to them, that they are interested in; that they involve the 4Cs and that should be evident through the entire district. It's important for the students to realize that they have both influence and impact; they have choice and they have a voice. They also believe that the students are citizens of the world while they're in school.

The first guiding principle has to do with core ethical values being the foundation of what the district believes in. The learning goals for this year are to continue to make sure that our learning outcomes are aligned with state and national standards; teaching for learning would be that we are using instructional practices that focus on the 4Cs with a more refined focus on critical thinking; looking at formative and summative assessments that are aligned with learning outcomes and to do a comprehensive assessment inventory; and to develop a district-wide communication plan, policy and resources to support student outcomes as well as create and communicate response to declining enrollment.

Dr. Veronesi explained that they tried to look three to five years out and are looking for District 13 to become a model for the state in several areas, including the response to declining enrollment.

Mr. Moore asked for a recess at this point to move to the joint meeting and to reconvene the Board meeting later.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to recess the regular meeting of the Board of Education at this point to go to the Joint Meeting.

In favor of recessing the regular meeting of the Board of Education to go to the Joint Meeting: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.

The meeting resumed at 9:35 PM.

A. Review of Strategic Coherence Plan and Mission Statement

Mrs. Boyle stated that she loved the mission statement and appreciated the time, effort and energy put into it: Through engagement in authentic learning all Regional School District 13 students are empowered to thrive and contribute as global citizens.

Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Mr. Augur, to approve the Mission Statement and Strategic Plan, as presented.

In favor of approving the Strategic Plan as presented: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Committee Reports

A. Pension Committee - October 12, 2017

Mrs. Neubig reported that they had a presentation from Morgan Stanley about the different fund managers and their investing styles. They also discussed the disclosure report, as required as part of the annual audit. There was a weighted rate of return for 12 months at 7.92 percent.

B. Utilization Committee - October 26, 2017

Dr. Taylor reported that they discussed the Silver Petrucelli proposal and the additional time line. It will include a review of physical structures, infrastructure capacity including the high school, programmatic discussions with teachers and then generation of multiple options that will be proposed. They talked about the planning approach regarding grade configurations and that will be ongoing. They had also discussed Korn School and Dr. Taylor suggested that that will be on the agenda for the next meeting as well.

Dr. Taylor stated that the Committee made the decision to bring the proposal to the full Board at a cost of \$19,500 which Dr. Veronesi then renegotiated and it is now \$18,500.

Dr. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Mr. Augur, to authorize Dr. Veronesi to enter into an agreement with Silver Petrucelli for the Four-School Grade Restacking Study.

Mrs. Boyle asked about the time frame and Dr. Veronesi stated that it was just received last night and goes out to March. Dr. Taylor felt that information will come in as the study progresses.

Mrs. Neubig reported that the District has received a refund from Worker's Comp in the amount of \$17,706 which was unbudgeted.

In favor of approving Dr. Veronesi entering into an agreement with Silver Petrucelli for the Four-Grade Restacking Study: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

New Business

A. Vote to Accept the Pension Committee Resolution

Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to resolve that, effective November 8, 2017 and according to section 8.5 of the Defined Benefit Pension Plan for Employees of Regional School District 13 (Pension Plan), the governing guidelines in effect for the Pension Committee and the Board hereby appoints the following persons to serve on the Pension Committee for the new terms that are set forth below, with such terms commencing November 8, 2017: Mary Jane Parsons (two years), Rebecca Adams (two years), Tippy Popp (two years).

In favor of appointments to the Pension Committee, as above: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

B. Vote to Allow Exemptions for Food Items

Mrs. Neubig reported that the District participates in the Healthy Food Certification and food items that are served at certain events need to be exempted. These include athletic events, family fun nights and fund raisers.

Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to allow exemptions for food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutritional Standards (CNS) provided that (1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of a regular school day or on the weekend; the sale is at the location of the event and (3) the food items are not sold from vending machine or school store.

In favor of allowing exemptions of food items, as above: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

C. Vote to Ratify the Administrators' Contract

Dr. Veronesi explained that she had sent a copy of the contract to everyone and just today received the one-page cover sheet from the attorney which reviews changes in insurance, the TSA and salaries. Dr. Veronesi shared that the process was a respectful, collegial negotiation that the administrators noted was far different than in the past. She stated that it is very important to maintain the high level of administration in the District.

Mr. Sadinsky explained that the union has ratified the agreement and echoed Dr. Veronesi's comments and felt that it was as positive a process.

Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the Administrators' contract.

Mrs. Petrella asked about the leave policy being at the discretion of the Superintendent and asked that the Board be informed when leave is granted. Mrs. Boyle felt that everyone would know if an administrator was on leave as they are such a small group.

Mrs. Petrella also asked about the financial impact of this contract and Mrs. Neubig explained that there had been a salary increase, an increase in the GSA and some insurance savings, and that, based on this year's information; the three-year contract will cost the District \$86,000. Mrs. Petrella felt that if the Board was going to put in an increase, they would also need to suggest where that money will come from. She felt that the Board should work hard to control things that they can control, such as salaries, and that they should be offset by a savings somewhere.

Mrs. Boyle suggested Mrs. Petrella take part in the negotiations and stated that she fully supports this contract. Mr. Moore felt that the District has a very good administrative team. Dr. Taylor pointed out a typo in the Leave section.

In favor of approving the Administrators' contract: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
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