

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in special session on Monday, March 28, 2018 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. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.

Board members absent: None

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

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

The Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to approve the agenda, as presented.

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

Public Comment

Melissa Booth, from Durham, reviewed that the Board of Education agendas state that the community honors the core ethical values of the District and she felt that this did not happen on Monday night. Mrs. Booth commented that she is very upset because of the time spent on the information flyer that was never distributed. She explained that studies have shown that transitions have a negative impact on student performance, participation, motivation and self-esteem and that less transitions show a higher rate of high school completion. Mrs. Booth doesn't feel that this is about the money; that it is about the children. She also feels that safety is very important, but does not agree with armed guards in her children's schools. She felt it's ridiculous that the Board would look at \$300,000 for armed guards and \$150,000 for an SRO, but would not pass \$33,000 to reinstate music.

Maya Liss, from Durham, echoed Mrs. Booth's comments especially with regard to the core ethical values. She felt that having the vote on Monday night with no notice to the public was a disregard of responsibility, respect and honesty. Mrs. Liss stated that if the Board felt that that vote was okay, then they do not understand their role as a publicly-elected representative and that they should consider resigning now.

Carl Stoup, from Durham, thanked the Board, Dr. Veronesi and the staff for the long hours and research that has gone into addressing and resolving these issues. He was not happy that the news media is involved now, after all the time that has been put into this. Mr. Stoup thanked Dr. Veronesi for her forward thinking and visioning plan and felt that the new strategic plan sounds exciting and one that includes all students equally. He also wondered if the parents who are in favor of the two-program approach will want it changed once their children reach the eighth grade and have to go to the high school.

Conor Driscoll, from Durham, explained that he is a first grader at John Lyman School and heard that the Board is closing is school. He asked the Board to come to the school and sing the song that they wrote for visitors and they can show all of the projects that they have done to make the school a better place.

Daphne Liss, a second grade senator for John Lyman School, explained that her paragraph is supposed to support her school. She explained that if their school closes, tons of parents will not like it. They like having choices. She felt that they would not get to see their friends in other grades a lot if they go to different schools. She felt that the town will be different and teachers might even be at a different school. She will miss her classroom and related arts teachers and a lot of students do not want this to happen. She felt that her school is a community and hoped that the Board would not let her school fall apart.

Mary Spenceley Taylor, a fourth grade senator at John Lyman School, stated that they heard that the Board voted to split the kindergarten, first and second graders from the third and fourth graders and they do not like it. They are concerned that if John Lyman is closed, it will break the connection between the third and fourth graders and the rest of the school and they will no longer have Study Buddies. There will also be fewer kids to show the kindergartners how to behave. They would also lose the opportunity to teach the younger kids what they learn at assembly. She was also worried that some teachers will lose their jobs and explained that the teachers teach in a way that keeps them from being bored and makes them excited to come to school.

Sophia Taylor from Durham, is in second grade at John Lyman. She does not like that they are splitting her school up because they will not be able to do activities together, such as Study Buddies and many other programs. She felt there will be less creativity. She also stated that there would be no invites where the first and second graders invite the third and fourth graders to lunch and recess. She wants to stay together.

Molly Marteka, a sophomore at Coginchaug, went to John Lyman School and felt it was her home. She noted the nurturing teachers and the diverse activities. As she moved from kindergarten to fourth grade, she developed into an independent thinker and a creative leader. She felt that the years spent at Lyman are the foundation for her life. She learned Spanish and sign language when she was seven years old and can still say Happy Birthday in both languages. Without John Lyman, she would not be the person she is today. Lyman was the perfect balance of independent and support and the students built inseparable bonds. Lyman was never about groups and she was friends with everyone at the school. She felt that ID is what makes RSD13 different and it doesn't matter where it is housed. She stressed that it is important that ID stays K-5 or K-4 because that is what makes it so different. She felt that the Board could close Lyman if they want to be like every other district in the state.

Tina Gossner, from Durham, stated that she had three children go through the ID program who are now all in their 20s. Thanks to the ID program, they are all doing really well. This District has had great success with many programs, including music, outdoor education and integrated day. Mrs. Gossner explained that a lot of the millennials want to move to the city and if Durham and Middlefield want to entice families to come, we need to be sparkling, not mediocre. She felt that we should not get rid of programs that help us stand above the rest. Mrs. Gossner looked at Forbes today and the list of what employers are looking for includes independent thinking, problem solving, proactive and goal-oriented, work well on a team, self-directed, able to identify their own strengths, have an excitement about learning and be responsible. These are the core tenets of the integrated day program. Mrs. Gossner reminded the Board that it is not just about the young child. They are preparing the children for adult life.

Lindsay Dahlheimer, from Durham, came with sadness that she hopes to not have to feel again. She has twin boys in second grade at John Lyman and explained that they moved to Durham because their old district did not fully take the input of the community into consideration. They found the district where their children had the best chance to thrive and help them love learning again in Durham and John Lyman. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the program was so much more than looping classrooms, arts integration and student leadership. It is the entire

four-year concept that builds upon itself. She has watched the growth of her children and she is sickened to think of all the siblings and classmates who will never get that chance. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that Mr. Augur cast aside any thought to the children in the wake of this vote and felt it was a slap in the face to her, her children, the taxpayers and the 25 years of the successful program. She states that Mr. Augur made it clear that it was ultimately the Board's decision and he felt that they had received enough feedback to move forward with a vote that wasn't even on the agenda. Mrs. Dahlheimer explained that the only information she had were rumors about John Lyman closing. She quoted a teacher as saying that John Lyman's building is the house, but the program is their home and family. She felt that the vote made it clear that their home and family didn't matter and she was outraged to feel that the faith she had placed in the District was poorly misplaced. She suggested that the Utilization Committee, Superintendent and the Board of Education go back to the drawing board and if it is found to be 100 percent necessary to close the building, they should lay out a long-term and seamless integration of the two programs. She felt that two years is not enough. She also stated that she cannot vote for the school budget at this time for her children and didn't know how much longer she would stay in town.

Theresa Weimann, from Durham, has two children that attend John Lyman. She explained that the news media was present because they were asked to come and the crowd is this large because most of them were waiting for a survey that was promised and they were here to tell the Board they won't stand for it. She also noted that she was at Dunkin Donuts at 6:30 this morning passing out flyers and she met a parent who had started the fight for the integrated day program back in 1968 and she was shocked and saddened that this has happened. She then read excerpts from a letter she had written a few weeks back which she had received no response to.

Janice Wenzel, from Durham, also commented that she is a mother of two graduates from the integrated day program who are now 36 and 37. She does understand that a cost/benefit analysis needed to be done, but also felt it was essential to consider the impact of the ID/HOT program. Her son returned last year as a visiting author/illustrator and remarked about the spirit and atmosphere of creative thinking and the ability of the children to express themselves and interact with confidence and poise. He has visited dozens of schools and he felt John Lyman is like no other school he has been in. She felt that the first learning years of a child's life set the course for their entire life and the John Lyman community (K-4) did that for her children. She sincerely asked the Board to reconsider their position and look at all reconfiguration possibilities to provide opportunities for these children to continue on their journey.

Arianna Eddinger, a fourth grade student at John Lyman, felt that having two grades in the same classroom is important because the older students can help the younger students. She feels that this is a vital model process, if it were to keep happening. If the school configurations are changed, the special quality at John Lyman will all be lost. She does not think that Lyman must stay, but did ask the Board to please keep two grades together in the classroom.

Melissa DiPietro explained that she is a certified Connecticut teacher and knows that John Lyman is special because she has been to many schools. They also moved to the community for the integrated day program and the HOT school. She also feels that the program creates a family atmosphere and she knows that her children are safe to learn what they need to learn and it sets the foundation for their future years. Her oldest used to hate school, but now loves school and is happy to go every day. Mrs. DiPietro doesn't know how the Board can get rid of such a strong, amazing program that supports so many children in so many different ways. She reminded the Board that people are moving out of town and doesn't understand why they would do away with a program that gets people to move into town.

Maddy Ventola, a third grader at John Lyman, stated that she loves her school. Her favorite part is having assemblies where they get to share and she also likes having two grades together in one classroom. She asked the Board to please not take John Lyman away.

Hannah Kowalski explained that she went to John Lyman as a child and is now an environmental geologist. She knew what she wanted to do because she was excited to learn in general and she believes a large part of that came from going through the integrated day program. A petition has circulated to students who have graduated, gone to college and moved away. She read the petition to the Board that was in support of John Lyman and the integrated day program as well as the names of the signers.

Aggie Cahill, from Durham, stated that Hannah Kowalski is her daughter and she has had a total of three children go through the John Lyman program. She noted how devoted the parents and children are to the John Lyman program. She had never experienced the joy of learning that the students have until her children went through the program. She understands that the Board's job is not to just look at how much they are about the program, but she feels that they should. She felt that the Board members have a dual responsibility to every person in Middlefield and Durham and to educate the children. By having a choice, the Board allows for different ways of teaching to ensure that every child receives the kind of education that helps them thrive. She also pointed out that the Board's responsibility to every person in Middlefield and Durham is affected by this decision because the choice is not available in other school districts. That will impact how many people move in and how many people move out. She felt that if the Board gets rid of the ID program, everyone will be hurt.

Julie Sass, from Rockfall, is a Brewster parent who looked at both schools and she decided on the program at Brewster and has found it amazing. The care and individual attention at Brewster couldn't have been better, but she can also understand the sadness and concern here from the Lyman parents because nobody wants the choice taken away. Mrs. Sass feels that both programs are amazing, but stressed how great the teachers, staff, students and programs at Brewster have been. She hoped that there would be a way to integrate the programs, but begged the Board to please not put eighth graders in with high school students. She also encouraged the Board to keep the music program intact and have a full-rounded education.

Laura Samperi, from Durham, stated that she has been an educator in a Derby school for 16 years and did her practicum in Region 13 which was a big reason why they moved here. She has three children, enrolled in both programs. She appreciates the choice and worries that people defending a program are coming off as ranking one program over another. All parents should be upset because both programs will effectively be changed. She believes that parents from both programs do not understand the other program. She reminded everyone that they are all here for what is best for the kids and encouraged contemporary parents to check out the website for the HOT schools, but she also encouraged all ID parents to go to the Brewster website and view the contemporary program booklet. This program already follows many HOT practices as part of good teaching. She does feel that a quick vote exacerbated an already tense situation and she hopes that the towns can unite.

Shari Adams, from Durham, has a daughter in second grade at Lyman and a son who graduated Cuginchaug. She read a letter from her son, Kyle Adams, which is in opposition to the Board's decision to effectively eliminate the integrated day program by closing John Lyman School. He graduated in 2016 as the valedictorian and felt it was important for the Board to hear a prior student's perspective. He also mentioned the petition that has been circulating. He mentioned the unique properties of the ID program, including democratic practice, civic participation, student freedom, presentation skills, critical thinking and interdisciplinary education. He felt that the activities give students confidence to present in front of a large audience, encourage extracurricular involvement and give students the freedom to think critically and engage in problem-solving. He mentioned

activities at Strong School that continued with these properties. He did not think it was wise to try to combine the best of both programs as they offer different approaches to education and felt that the contemporary program also maintains a unique educational approach that better meets the needs of certain types of students. He felt it was the responsibility of the Board of Education to seek public input and study the potential implications of programmatic changes in an open and honest manner.

Peyton Palo-Mack, a third grade student at John Lyman, loves her school for many reasons and specifically mentioned Study Buddies. She pointed out that they have a senate and vote on things that should be changed or kept. When they vote on something, they always communicate with the classrooms first and she knows that the Board did not communicate with the towns before they voted to change their school and separate the younger kids from the older kids. She invited the Board to come to one of the senate meetings and she doesn't feel that it's right that the Board voted without telling their moms and dads. She felt that if the grades are separated, they can't be the HOT school that they are now. She asked how the Board will know what a great school Lyman is if they don't come to visit.

Taylor Connell and Eliana Frascilla are in sixth grade at Memorial School, but they met on the first day of kindergarten at John Lyman. They felt they had a great learning experience at John Lyman and if the Board takes away the K-4 HOT school program, they will be taking away the opportunity for Study Buddies, senate, resident artist, art board, literary board, Hello chorus and so much more. All of these activities teach children how to be leaders and good citizenship. Assemblies also help students get over nerves with public speaking. They asked the Board to please keep the program.

Erin Holden, a Lyman alumna and a teacher at a different school district, was blown away by the amazing qualities of the District that she didn't appreciate while she was a student. She can't think of another school or district that she has been in that's like Lyman. The students there are being prepared for real life and specifically noted Young Author's Day. Students have ownership of their learning, their behavior and their work. She also highlighted the opportunity that they have to mentor other students. Ms. Holden mentioned that subjects that are not being tested on state tests are being removed from curriculum.

Jenny Zaclli, a fourth grader senator at John Lyman, stated that today was one of the saddest days at her school. When she heard that her school will close for the next generations to come, it broke her heart. She knows that she doesn't understand everything at nine years old, but she stated how happy she was at John Lyman. She has always heard her parents say that John Lyman School was the best choice for her and her brother and sister. She never thought she would be the last kid in her family to go there. She also feels that separating the grades is not the best option to keep the kids happy.

Sharon Berndt, a teacher at John Lyman School, was present to read a letter from a former student, Michael Barra. He wished he could be present to share his support, but he is currently living his dream, a dream that the school and program helped him to realize. He is an actor on Broadway and he knew that's what he wanted to do when he set foot on the stage at John Lyman. He also mentioned field trips and immersive class projects opened up their minds to different ways of thinking. He gave examples of the communal approach to learning and having multiple ages in the classroom. He summarized by stating the program works and he felt that he would not be where he is today or who he is today without John Lyman School and the integrated day program.

Janina Eddinger felt that there is a lot of passion for the program and Brewster School as well. She understands that the Board wants to combine the best of both and save the taxpayers money, but she feels that there should

be an option of what it would cost for the renovation of John Lyman and the cost of the option for two K-5 schools, whether they are the same program or not.

Heidi Johnson stated that she has been attending meetings for many years about changing school buildings. Her children are at Brewster and Memorial. When she heard the comment during the vote about allowing time to move forward, she had not thought that this plan would be the best things from Brewster or Lyman, but to look forward to see where we want to be and what we want to be doing without any preconceived notions. She trusts that that can be done. She also commented that she could not have loved her kids' Brewster experience more and feels like they did have some of the same great opportunities and a very positive experience. She does, however, feel that it would be inappropriate and unsafe to have eighth graders in the high school.

Kylie Dailey, a second grader at John Lyman, thanked her mom and dad that they did everything they could not to leave this town last year when they sold their house in Durham. They now pay twice the taxes to stay here because our new home is bigger.

Dr. Jan Frank, from Durham, stated that all the kids speaking here tonight reminded her of being back at the assemblies at John Lyman. Twenty years ago, they built a house in Durham and she was told that John Lyman was most like a private school and she found that to be true. She has three integrated day alumni who all ended up in science. She wasn't sure if the Board of Ed realized that about five years ago, John Lyman was showcased as a jewel in the state. She reported that got a text from her two daughters who were very upset. She also gave an example of her son dancing one night. She hoped that the Board will reconsider and she was extremely disappointed that the Board voted without allowing comment.

Jen Case, from Middlefield, has three children in the District, one at Memorial, one at Brewster and one who will be entering kindergarten at Lyman in September. She was attracted to the idea of a HOT school when they moved here, but their children's cousins were in Brewster so they went there and they have found many excellent things about their education. Her biggest concern is the school transitions as it has been the hardest thing for her daughter, who will have been in six schools by the time she graduates high school (five of them in District 13). She understands declining enrollment, but also doesn't feel that going to Memorial in fourth grade has been ideal for her daughter. Her daughter also says that she wishes she had some of the opportunities that the ID students have. Mrs. Case feels that choice is very important and they are ready to make the other choice at this point. She would really hope that her son doesn't have to go through all of the school transitions that the previous kids have.

Mark Harvey, who is both an alumnus of the ID program and a parent, understands that the District is gentrifying and that enrollment is declining. He does not want the eighth graders in the high school, but he feels like they are risking losing something that makes the town special. He bought a house in town so his stepson could go to John Lyman. When his stepson arrived in third grade, he couldn't read at a first grade level. When he finished fourth grade at John Lyman, he was reading at his school level. He also has two daughters who will be going through the ID program. He did admit that there has been, and still is, a rivalry between the two programs.

Mary Paul, an alumna of the integrated day program, thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak and thanked everyone who came to the meeting and explained that she was also representing Collin Halloran, another alumnus. She explained that Collin Halloran is an internationally-published, award-winning poet and is a leading expert in the poetry of war. He is currently a Professor of English at Coastal Carolina and could not be here tonight. Ms. Paul read a letter from Mr. Halloran to the Board. He encouraged the Board not to end the

integrated day program. He feels that the arts education he received, particularly at John Lyman, was vital to his development as a writer and a human being. He feels that some of his most valuable books are the ones that were published in his classes at Lyman. He pointed out that the most influential people in his life were Christine Anderson and Carl Bruenn, both teachers at John Lyman. Her time ran out and she was unable to speak for herself.

Hope Giammatteo, a fourth grader at John Lyman, told the Board that one of her favorite parts at John Lyman is Echoes, where you get to work with other students. She also likes that third and fourth graders get to be together because the older students can help the younger students. She hopes that the Board does not close Lyman because she really loves it there and has spent her whole entire life there.

Peggy Best, from Middlefield, moved here in 1980 because there was choice. She stated that she is a taxpayer, but her children are long gone from the District. Their experience here was excellent and John Lyman was a central part of that. She feels that there are three critical issues: building closure, the integrity of the program and the process by which the decision was made. She understands that the building may need to be closed, but does feel it needed more discussion. She believes that the choice factor is really critical and that the integrated day program has to stay together, not only for the children but also the educators. Mrs. Best is very disappointed in the lack of discussion and she felt that there needs to be public input if there is going to be a school closure. She does believe that the Board can remedy the process, but they will need to reconsider their decision.

Michael Gillen, from Durham, has a kindergartner at John Lyman School and hopes to send his two younger children there as well. He agrees with a lot that has already been said and reiterated that they have had a tremendous experience there. He explained that he did not know that this was happening. He had recently completed a communication survey sent out by the District and said that the District communicates very well. He found a flyer in his mailbox today telling him to come tonight. He then went to the website, but couldn't find any information. He reviewed the core value list, pointing out effective communication and soliciting community opinions. He found that the Board didn't meet those values and found that disheartening. He asked the Board to reconsider their stance on this. He also pointed out that by holding a public vote on an item that was not on the agenda, they have opened up the District to directors' and officers' liability as well as school leaders' liability and the financial impact of that is much greater.

Kathi McMaster has lived in Durham since 1992 and felt that she was a minority voice in the room. She commented that, before too long, she will be taxed right out of this town. Costs need to be cut. She realizes that there is a stronger voice from the Lyman parents and the program choice people, but a way needs to be found to cut costs. She asked how much it actually costs to have program choice, with two sets of buses, two curriculums and duplication of jobs. She mentioned the rift that is felt between the two groups of students. She asked if there could be a way to take the best of both worlds and find a way to find togetherness.

Gavin Hutter, a second grader at John Lyman School, made comments about what he likes at John Lyman and how he thrives there. There is literally artwork hanging from the ceiling. He even cries on snow days because he wants to go and see his friends. His mom stated that they have found a community of warm northerners and are grateful for the opportunities. She commented on how safe and happy the students are at Lyman and how they love each other. She hoped the Board could find a way to keep the Lyman community going.

Jennifer DePetivo, from Durham, read a letter regarding Option A asking the Board to reconsider the vote to move forward on Option A which would result in the closing of John Lyman School and likely the ID program.

She noted that proper notice that a vote would be held was not given to the public and felt that due process would require ample notice given to the public. Second, the costs of each of the reconfiguration options should have been presented and voted on via referendum by the taxpayers before any school closure. Third, she asked that the Board consider vacating their vote in order to allow proper notice for the public and for the Board to thoroughly consider all three options as well as other options. Due process is required when a complete reconfiguration of the District is proposed.

Mary Farnsworth, from Middlefield, thanked the Board for their long, thankless hours of service. She understands that there are tough budget questions and wanted to make two points. First, she echoed that John Lyman is a gem and is very similar to a private school with a culture that is hard to find in a lot of public schools. She feels it is not focused on the tests, but is more focused on the passion for learning. She would hope that the Board would reconsider its options and try to protect that school culture. She also asked them to balance the long-term and short-term savings and felt that the District is the best advertising for the communities.

Kirstin Olszewski, with a second grader at Lyman, felt that the biggest thing that has not yet been pointed out is that Region 13 is ranked 62 in the State of Connecticut, with a mill rate in Middlefield of 32.84 and in Durham of 39.5. Madison is ranked 10 and has a mill rate of 37.3, Guilford is ranked 24 and has a mill rate of 28.67, and Clinton is ranked 31 and has a mill rate of 29.91. The only thing keeping people in town right now is the choice of the John Lyman program. Tax savings is obviously not the marketing tool to bring people into town. If the Board wants to see a continuing decline in enrollment, then they should close this program because she has already had her realtor on the line.

Rick Hanley, a parent of a 2013 Coginchaug graduate who went to Lyman, stated that his son had learning disabilities and was told he may never go to college. He graduated from college this past fall. Mr. Hanley was also a previous treasurer for John Lyman PTO. He believes that the HOT program definitely needs to be continued. He is also the former economic development chairman for the Town of Durham and agreed that one of the things that keeps property values in this town where they are is the school district. He believes that the level of communication and the decision making that has gone on here was shameful. He would ask that the Board seriously think again and discuss again this whole intent. He believes that the facility is one thing, but the program is something totally different. Mr. Hanley stated that it takes taxpayers, like him, to get out and motivate people to stand behind a budget and if this goes through, he was not sure he could do that.

Christopher Champagne, from Middlefield, echoed the sentiments of many people that spoke tonight about John Lyman School. He was nervous standing in front of everyone to speak, but explained that his second grade son could do it without a problem because of John Lyman. He spoke about the basic process that the senators in elementary school take part in. He cannot come to a lot of Board of Education meetings, but always votes in referendums. He stated that he relies on the minutes from the Board of Education meetings to stay abreast of issues. He was shocked, appalled and frankly disgusted that a vote had happened on Monday. The minutes stated that there would be no vote until the public was consulted and that a document would be circulated describing the proposed changes as well as a Utilization Committee survey. He feels that the Board should be working with the public and should not have voted without getting the input. There was also supposed to be a community information session and he felt that the taxpayers deserved that. He feels that what happened on Monday night was not courageous, responsible, honest or respectful to all of the parents and taxpayers. He did point out that Mrs. Boyle had suggested the Board slow down as this was a very significant step and he urged the Board to do exactly that right now and reconsider an improper vote that exposes the District to legal liability. He encouraged the Board to follow the plan that they had said they were going to.

Bonnie Koba, a parent of kids that graduated from John Lyman School and Region 13, stated that she has been a resident of Durham for a long time and is also the director of the HOT schools program. She has always been so proud to be able to bring educators from all over the state to John Lyman School to get an understanding of the learning process in Lyman. There are schools across the state and across the nation that would kill to have what we have here. Mrs. Koba explained that it is about the commitment of the community that started long before HOT schools came around and about the idea of the difference between the traditional/contemporary program and the integrated program. She stated that teachers work their tails off in both programs and that is what makes District 13 so unique, so different and so valuable. She would urge the Board to close neither program, but to give great consideration to figuring out a way to continue to manage both.

Brian Dreyfus, from Durham, currently has two children at Lyman and is outraged that this decision was made with no input from the community. They too moved to the town because of choice. He felt that they get taxed through the nose, but this is what makes this town better. He felt that it was disgusting that the Board made the decision without getting input.

Next Board Meeting - April 4, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School

Additional Action on Option A

Mr. Moore explained that there has been a lot of concern since the last meeting and explained that an attempt was made at the last meeting to reconsider the vote, but they wanted to have the process correct and were not able to act on that. In light of that, Mr. Moore has prepared a motion to move forward.

Mr. Moore made a motion (read by Mr. Hicks), seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to conduct a public information and dialog meeting on Option A of the Utilization Committee's study on April 25, 2018 to discuss implementation process, timing and schedule, strategic visioning integration issues, program development and integration, transition issues, cost and savings, capital needs and barriers. I move further to send out information on Option A and alternatives by April 13, 2018, along with notice of the meeting to residents of the District. I make a motion to defer implementation of any specific steps to effectuate Option A or other District restructuring plan until such time as the public information and dialog meeting has been concluded and the Board has reviewed the information gathered through that process and approved, at a specific process and time line, for a District restructuring plan.

Mrs. Boyle felt that that was a long motion and she would like to see a copy of it. If it means that the Board is slowing down and the public has a chance to participate, she would be fine. Dr. Friedrich felt that the motion made at the last meeting made a decision and he didn't see any opportunity in this motion for the Board to change that decision.

Mr. Moore explained that Mr. Yamartino had requested a rescission and Mr. Moore spoke to the attorney and in order to do that, they had to get the original motion as stated on the record for tonight's meeting. He did not get that from the minutes in time to post it in time at the Town Hall so that vote could not be taken tonight. Mr. Moore suggested that a motion to rescind that action be put on the agenda for April 4th. Mrs. Boyle would like to edit the motion to include that statement, but Dr. Veronesi stated that they could not do that because it has to be noticed.

Mr. Yamartino stated that since this current motion suspends all activities on the motion that had passed means that a rescission can be conducted at a future meeting. If action were taken, it would preclude the Board from being able to rescind it. Mr. Moore reviewed that the motion sets up a public meeting, sets out the requirement to send out a public notice and stops all action until the information session has been completed. He stated that the information session will, in fact, be a dialog where the public can ask questions and the Board can answer, including cost information. Mrs. Petrella asked if the survey would still be included and Mr. Moore stated that it could be.

Dr. Taylor asked that the process be slowed down even more by not setting actual dates. He feels that the community is asking the Board to find a different way and he didn't feel that there was a clear conception of what would be included in any proposed program. Dr. Taylor feels that a very clear outline of what would be available be presented to the public and feels that they have broken a lot of public trust by their decision.

Mr. Moore did not feel that having a meeting on April 25th would preclude the Board from having several more, if needed. He would like to get the process started and if they hear new options, they can add time to the process. Dr. Taylor felt that the message needs to be clearly addressed as to when they anticipate making a decision.

Dr. Friedrich explained that part of the concern has been that, if construction is planned, there is a deadline to follow in order to get state funding to support that construction. If the District were to wait beyond that deadline, it is possible that the state aid will be cut and anything that is done will cost more. Dr. Friedrich does feel that that is less important than getting the decision right.

Mr. Augur felt like the Utilization Committee did explore every possibility of all the options that had been presented and asked Dr. Taylor what he thought might come to light between now and the dates in the motion. Dr. Taylor felt that the main issue is solving the eighth grade problem and that many Board members may choose a different approach if that were not included. Dr. Taylor thought that they should look at how to deliver two K-5 programs, a 6-8 and a 9-12. When first looked at, that was excessively expensive but he thought that there may a less expensive option that should be explored.

Mr. Moore felt there was enough flexibility in this motion to get beyond those particular dates, but this would be enough to start the process.

In favor of conducting a public information and dialog meeting on Option A of the Utilization Committee's study on April 25, 2018 to discuss implementation process, timing and schedule, strategic visioning integration issues, program development and integration, transition issues, cost and savings, capital needs and barriers. And further to send out information on Option A and alternatives by April 13, 2018, along with notice of the meeting to residents of the District. A motion to defer implementation of any specific steps to effectuate Option A or other District restructuring plan until such time as the public information and dialog meeting has been concluded and the Board has reviewed the information gathered through that process and approved, at a specific process and time line, for a District restructuring plan: Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. In opposition: Mr. Roraback. Abstained: Mr. Augur. Motion passed.

Mr. Moore suggested a brief recess before moving on to the security budget. The Board took a 15-minute break.

2018-2019 Regional School District 13 Budget Discussion**A. Security Funding**

Mr. Moore reminded everyone that at the meeting on Monday they discussed security and voted to do a variety of things, including window film, cameras, monitors and additional signage. They also voted to add a School Resource Officer and security guards, but did look for a cost analysis on that and how it will be paid for. They now have estimated costs and it will need to go to bid.

Dr. Veronesi reiterated that her original proposal did not include security guards as she had proposed only the SRO. One of the security companies they reached out to stated that they no longer provide armed guards because they don't believe in having guns in schools. We could choose to still pursue that, through Pinkerton, and the estimate for 180 days, at \$80 per hour, 7-1/4 hours a day, would be \$104,000 per school, for a total of \$520,000. These armed guards do not typically interact with students, but they would try to find the right fit for us if that was important.

Dr. Veronesi also spoke with Sgt. Burns and if the Board chooses to go with an SRO, they would create an MOU and a presentation could be provided. She did request that the funding for an SRO be in next year's budget.

2018-2019 Regional School District 13 Budget**A. Finalize 2018-2019 Budget for Public Hearing**

Mrs. Neubig reviewed that they would be looking for the Board to finalize the budget to move on to public hearing, per state statute. Both Mrs. Neubig and Dr. Veronesi believe that the SRO should remain in the budget at \$140,000 at the high end of the range. Mrs. Neubig explained that the SRO could be paid by re-appropriating money from the capital fund to purchased services. That would result in a zero increase budget, as was originally presented. If the District were to pursue armed guards at \$500,000, the budget would need to be increased. She did change the wording of the line item to be armed guards or other security so the budget can be moved forward. Mrs. Neubig proposed that the Board take a \$400,000 re-appropriation from capital and continue to make a plan.

Mrs. Neubig suggested taking \$300,000 from the capital fund, leaving \$100,000 for maintenance things that cannot be foreseen. She also noted that \$245,000 was allocated to debt service for potential bonding projects and \$100,000 could be taken from there. This would reduce the District's borrowing ability, but not remove it completely.

Any of the above options would keep the District at a zero percent budget increase, but sacrifices the capital. Dr. Veronesi also commented that if funds are reallocated, the District can wait until May or June to talk about what is done this year.

Mrs. Neubig then gave the option of how much the budget would increase without any reappropriation of funds. The original budget had already reduced expenditures by \$318,000 in order to get to zero percent. Adding an SRO at \$140,000, the budget would increase by .39 percent. If a total of \$400,000 were added for security (with \$260,000 as a placeholder), the budget would increase by 1.13 percent.

Mrs. Neubig explained that tonight's Board vote would be on the gross expenditures of the budget and the towns would, in fact, pay the difference between gross expenditures and revenue. Mr. Moore clarified that the referendum vote is also on the total expense line, not the net line.

Mrs. Boyle thanked Dr. Veronesi and Mrs. Neubig for gathering that information and asked about the dollar amount of adding a security monitor which she thought was \$6,000. Dr. Veronesi explained that she wanted to add another security monitor at the high school if there was no SRO. There had been no discussion of having security monitors at the other schools. Mrs. Boyle thought that providing that would give some sense of security to the students and parents at only \$25,000 per school. Mrs. Boyle doesn't feel that the District can go in the direction of armed guards, but would be in favor of the security monitors.

Mr. Moore explained that one option is to have a number in "not to exceed" costs for security of \$400,000 and then go to bid and have discussions with the State Police. The window film could be done by moving money around in the current budget. Mr. Augur suggested that the Board look at short-, medium- and long-term goals around security. Dr. Veronesi stated that the focus had been on what we can do right now, but she believes the District needs strategic improvement plan for security that includes those goals. Mr. Augur understood that film is easy to implement, but wonders if it is necessarily a priority. Dr. Veronesi agreed and felt it should be discussed at the Utilization Committee. Mr. Augur asked if the Board would be comfortable with a number to be used for what is ultimately decided as the priorities and Dr. Veronesi explained that that was what she was suggesting.

Mrs. Boyle would be comfortable moving ahead with the \$140,000 for the SRO, but not the \$260,000 for additional armed guards. Mrs. Geraci explained that the SRO is only a small piece of the puzzle and the mental health aspect is also important for the well-being of the children. She doesn't feel that the SRO will provide anything if that is not addressed. Dr. Veronesi reiterated that the SRO is not to address the mental health in the District and they are, in fact, addressing that through professional development and everyday programming. Dr. Veronesi agrees that the SRO is only one piece, but high school principals and superintendents have reported that students will go to the SRO about issues that they will not approach counselors or principals about. Mrs. Geraci would feel more comfortable putting in a number placeholder, but not identifying what security it is for. Mr. Augur agreed and would rather discussions continue before money is spent for film on windows or anything else.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to move forward with \$400,000 earmarked as possible, not required, expenditures for security, with a zero percent increase in the budget, to be paid with \$300,000 from capital and \$100,000 from debt service.

Mr. Yamartino felt that the 1 percent vacancy factor incorporated in the salary line item should be in the benefits line as well which would leave another \$60,000. He would suggest the Board reduce the placeholder by that amount or to reduce the benefits line item to help offset the expenditures. He also asked if 1.5 vs. 1 percent would be tenable. Mrs. Neubig stated that they felt that 1.5 percent would be tenable on salaries and noted that the benefits had already been adjusted with a \$200,000 decrease. That 1.5 percent on salaries would create a vacancy factor of \$300,000 and provides an additional \$100,000 that could be put towards safety measures.

Dr. Friedrich and Mrs. Petrella agreed to withdraw their motion.

Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to increase the vacancy factor on salary line item 100 to 1.5 percent for fiscal year 2018-2019.

Dr. Taylor feels that this is an accounting gimmick and any excess gets passed through to the next year. He is worried that under-budgeting that line item could create a problem. Mr. Yamartino explained that he feels strongly about it because historically the District has run between \$300,000 and over \$1 million in surplus in that line item. He pointed out that the sub line was also funded at 100 percent. He does not like the District carrying that surplus because it takes two years to get the excess money applied to the budget and, while this Board and administration is very transparent, that hasn't always been the case and may not always be the case. In fact, that salary surplus can be transferred to another line item even if the taxpayers never agreed to it. He also reminded the Board that there is a \$650,000 surplus in this year's salary line item which is important for cash flow purposes. Dr. Taylor thanked Mr. Yamartino for his explanation and felt that it made perfect sense.

Mrs. Boyle did state that they had always been at the impression that the line item needed to be funded at 100 percent.

In favor of increasing the vacancy factor on salary line item 100 to 1.5 percent for fiscal year 2018-2019: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mr. Augur, that the budget be adjusted to allow a maximum of \$400,000 for security, to be balanced by a \$100,000 reduction in debt service, a \$181,000 reduction in capital and a \$119,000 reduction in salaries, resulting in a zero percent increase in the budget.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned that the contract that the Town has with the troopers may provide additional coverage for the District.

Dr. Taylor asked what items may be delayed from a capital standpoint and Mr. Moore explained that Mrs. Neubig will have that information available for the budget presentation. Mr. Augur summarized that the Board is not eliminating capital expenditures, but have decided that security has taken priority over those expenditures.

Mrs. Petrella stated that she'd like to be sure the Board has some leeway in the security line items so she would like more than just the money for the SRO.

In favor of that adjusting the budget to allow a maximum of \$400,000 for security, to be balanced by a \$100,000 reduction in debt service, a \$181,000 reduction in capital and a \$119,000 reduction in salaries, resulting in a zero percent increase in the budget: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to approve to go to public hearing on the 2018-2019 Regional School District 13 Education Budget on April 11, 2018 with a gross budget of \$36,819,319.

Mrs. Boyle wanted to be clear that this budget does not include closing John Lyman School nor has this Board ever voted to close John Lyman School.

In favor of approving to go to public hearing on the 2018-2019 Regional School District 13 Education Budget on April 11, 2018 with a gross budget of \$36,819,319: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve to hold a referendum on the 2018-2019 Regional School District 13 Education Budget on May 8, 2018, preceded by a District meeting to be held on May 7, 2018.

In favor of approving to hold a referendum on the 2018-2019 Regional School District 13 Education Budget on May 8, 2018, preceded by a District meeting to be held on May 7, 2018: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Mr. Yamartino asked what the purpose of the District meeting prior to the referendum is and Mr. Hicks explained that it is really a formality as the budget is immovable at that point. The public hearing is where people may speak and final adjustments can be made at the meeting following the public hearing. Mrs. Boyle asked that all of the meeting information be posted on the website.

Communications

Mr. Moore reported that he had received letters from Heather Parente, Kate Farnsworth, John Farnsworth, Meredith Cella, Theresa Weimann, Chris O'Connell, Oanh Stephan, Cindy Dobrowski, Lynn Trifilo, Adrienne Dubec, Alana Marino, Stephanie O'Connell from NBC News, Lauren Takores from the Town Times, Kate Ganino, Christian Gonzales, Stephen Liss, Kimberly Feinberg, Ali Sinicrope, Jennifer DePattina, Tina Dreyfuss-Bates, Gwen Hunter, Kari Sullivan, Maya Liss, Oanh Stephan, Todd Snyder, David Adams, Casey Whittaker, Patrick Holden and Chad Reddick as of about 5:30 tonight. Comments were mostly concerning the closure of Lyman with some on music and some about Brewster. There were also a couple on strategic visioning and one or two about security. Mr. Moore has not been able to respond to the last three days' worth of over 60 letters and will try to do that in general.

Mr. Yamartino had a few phone calls from parents and two emails that were addressed specifically to him, some in favor of the action that was taken and some in support of maintaining the John Lyman program. He responded to each of them that the Board will be taking additional actions and that no final decisions have been made. Mr. Yamartino understands not having been able to respond for the last few days, but did think that responses were going out on a regular basis prior to that. He agreed that responses should come from one central place, but if that person is overwhelmed, possibly the emails should be divided up. Mr. Moore stated that he has been trying to write back to everyone, but has not done it since last Friday. Mr. Yamartino offered to help with responses, if necessary. Mrs. Boyle also explained that individual Board members should not respond as the message could be misinterpreted. Mr. Roraback cautioned about personalized email response also as it may not necessarily be a personal email, but rather one that was just copied and pasted to each member.

Public Comment

Denise Saraceno, from Middlefield, read an email from Christina Bates who could not be at the meeting regarding a meeting she had attended at John Lyman School on February 2, 2016 where Dr. Veronesi and Mrs. Flanagan ensured them that they would have input into the decisions being made about John Lyman School and that, under no circumstances, was the diminishment or removal of the ID/HOT program a possibility. She now felt very disrespected because of the vote that was taken on Monday night. She asked the Board to fulfill their promises by upholding the ID/HOT program and by adhering to the decision process for John Lyman School that respects the constituents.

Erica Fenwick, from Middlefield, had a concern about the conversation around security. She appreciates the flexibility of the budget but is concerned about a generic bucket security budget item. The Board would then have the ability to use that money as they please, without any input from the families that would be impacted. She would not be comfortable having guns in the schools and she would like to know exactly how the money would be allocated before she could vote yay or nay on the proposed budget.

Missy Booth wished she knew there was 1.5 percent in the salary line that was flexible because all they wanted was \$33,000 for the music department. She was disappointed that that had not come up in prior discussions.

Christine Girardi, from Durham, understood that John Lyman School will probably have to close, but wanted to know whether or not integrated day will continue. She needs the Board to base their vote on whether integrated day will continue and not on the building.

Theresa Weimann stated that they had a goal of getting 150 people to the meeting tonight and there were over 300. She also read a letter from her daughter, asking the Board not to close John Lyman. She also explained that everyone does not expect a detailed response to an email, but would like acknowledgment that they had been received.

A citizen, from Middlefield, loves that the District is not a one-size-fits-all and wanted to remind the Board that some of the larger activities that bring the community together were inspired by the ID program. When this process started, the Board assured the public that the enrollment projections were accurate. This year, the District is 109 students over the projection and will be 189 over in 2020-2021 and 234 students over by 2023-2024. She acknowledges that enrollment is declining and that a school needs to be closed, but does feel that we can now sustain two K-5 schools. She does not feel that anyone wants to support putting eighth grade into the high school unless they could be in a separate area of the building. She believes the Board will get more ideas by talking with the public. Going back to transparency, she asked the Board to be more transparent about the path they are taking their children down. Go back to the drawing board and make sure there are no other models that would make sense and whether the HOT school designation can fit into the new model. If it can't, people will move out of the District and there will definitely be a declining enrollment problem. She would also like to see what the combined approach looks like before the Board turns the District upside down.

Karen Meiman, from Durham, thanked the Board for all of their time and effort. She reiterated that the ID program is a program and a philosophy, not a building. Mrs. Meiman went to facilities meetings years ago and the projected decline in enrollment was greater than it actually will be and in order to close two schools, Brewster needed to be built up. Therefore, there is an element of cost associated with closing a school and the public has no information about that. She asked what is the best educational philosophy going forward and she stated that she believes that the less number of transitions, the better the students are. Mentorship is very important for the students. She also feels that any decisions, financial or otherwise, based on a partnership with the State of Connecticut are very unreliable. Mrs. Meiman also commented that the enrollment in the District is down almost 30 percent in the last 10 years; however there does not seem to have been a decrease in the amount of people working in Central Office. She also asked why many staffing changes impact the high school when they are only losing 20 students this year. She feels that school is not only for academics, but for becoming a well-rounded person.

Mr. Moore thanked everyone for all of their comments and participation.

Adjournment

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to adjourn the special meeting of the Board of Education.

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

Meeting was adjourned at 10:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First