

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education held a District Meeting on May 7, 2018 at 8:00 PM in the Julian Thayer Auditorium at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut.

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

Board members absent: Mrs. Boyle and Mr. Yamartino

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

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

District Meeting

Mr. Hicks read the call to the meeting, warning of district meeting and return of the call into the record.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Bob Moore, to nominate Jim Finley as moderator of the District Meeting.

In favor of nominating Jim Finley as moderator of the District meeting: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Finley thanked the chairman and turned the meeting over to the Board for a brief presentation on the proposed budget.

Mr. Moore explained that the various components of the budget are shown in the presentation as well as in the handout that is at the back of the room. The two biggest items in the budget are decreases in salaries of \$324,000 (due to a reduction of 6.3 positions throughout the District as well as not fully funding 100 percent of the salaries) and benefits of about \$293,000 (primarily due to all of the employees going on a high-deductible healthcare program). Purchased services is up by \$562,000 due to moving money for security purposes. The Board felt it was necessary to enhance security throughout the District and in order to do that, they moved approximately \$100,000 out of Debt Service, \$181,000 from Capital Improvements and \$118,000 from Salaries. The main components of Security that are being proposed are the possibility of a School Resource Officer, window protection and additional signage and hardening of some of the entryways.

Buildings and Grounds is also up slightly and Operating Services is down as are Supplies. Capital is up slightly, which includes a variety of projects that have been on the books for quite some time. Dues and Fees are up slightly and Debt Service is down by the \$200,000 already mentioned. In total, this produces a budget of \$36,819,319 which is \$318,582 less than last year. When counting in salary increases, there had been actual reduction of \$700,000-\$800,000 from the total budget in order to reach that number.

Moving to receipts, Mr. Moore reviewed that there has been a slight increase in Adult Education, a decrease in Interest Income, an increase in in-house tuition and activity fees and a net fund balance decrease of \$360,000. They have been trying to continue to decrease and minimize the fund balance carryover. The Transportation fund has been reduced to zero from State and Federal grants and Special Education Costs have increased about \$50,000. Revenue has decreased by \$318,000 from last year, giving a zero net increase on the budget.

Mr. Moore reviewed that the budget voted on tomorrow is the \$36,819,319. Based on student population, Mr. Moore noted that Middlefield's percentage went up and Durham went down. Durham's portion of this year's budget is \$23,331,445 (down about \$200,000 from last year) and Middlefield's portion is \$12,148,247 (up about \$200,000 from last year). The ECS grant to the Town of Durham is anticipated to be \$3,426,419 which would bring the total needed to be raised by taxes to \$19,905,000. Middlefield's estimated ECS grant is \$1,995,729, bringing the total needed to be raised by taxes to \$10,152,518.

Mr. Moore then went on to review the estimated cost per pupil which has increased over the years as a result of a fairly flat education budget but a reduction in enrollment. Cost per pupil was \$19,463 in 2015/2016 and, in 2016/2017, it dropped to \$18,956 (primarily due to the closing of Korn School). The estimates for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 are not available yet, but is approximately \$20,000 for this year.

Mr. Moore then showed the impact on an average assessed house (\$161,341 in Middlefield) and of the \$5,500 in taxes, \$4,000 is for education which is down \$8 from 2012. Over the last four to five years, school tax has only gone up about .5 percent. In Durham, the school allocation has gone up by \$18 over the last seven to eight years. Mr. Moore summarized that the Board and administration have worked hard over the past few years to keep the budget impact as low as possible despite major improvements.

Mr. Finley then opened the meeting to comments and questions from the public.

Chuck Stengel, from Durham, asked about the information on the flyer that was sent out vs. the flyer from last year. For SY 2017/2018, the net current expenditure per student was estimated to be \$19,492 but in this year's flyer, the estimate went up to \$20,411. He asked why there was that big a difference in those two numbers and how much faith can be put in this year's estimate.

Mrs. Neubig explained that the actual cost per student cannot be done until after the actual enrollment numbers and expenditures are known. The reason that the flyers had different estimated per pupil expenditures was because the numbers had been updated. Enrollment numbers and expenditures change all the time. Mrs. Neubig explained that this year's number is her best guess, but she isn't sure how it will turn out.

Rick Parmelee, from Durham, thanked the Board for bringing the budget to referendum. He also thanked the Town of Durham for the education that his three children got in this system. He stated that activity fees need to be removed as they have no place in the public school system. Every student should be entitled to the programs that are available at the school without paying additional money. He also felt that the football program should be removed from the athletic program due to the cost to maintain the program and concussion injuries. Mr. Parmelee commented on the economic problems of the State of Connecticut and he doesn't feel that towns like Durham and Middlefield who are fiscally responsible should have to pay for towns that are not. Income to fund education is now coming from marijuana and gambling and he is not impressed. Sources of revenue should be legitimate businesses. He commented that marijuana is illegal at the federal level and state laws do not supersede federal laws. The Boards of Finance and Selectmen spend a lot of time on the finances of the town and yet the Board of Education has no review by an independent Board of Finance. He commented on what the Governor did last year with payments to the towns and the teachers' pension. Mr. Parmelee also commented on the talented, valuable people at town hall and mentioned that no one makes \$107,280 a year with 25 vacation days, five personal days, 15 sick days like the head of maintenance in the District. He reminded everyone that the members of the Boards and Commissions in town don't get paid. He felt that the Board of Education should have respect for local government. He also asked why the Devil's Advocate is subsidized and felt that that should be

public knowledge. Mr. Parmelee commented that he was never in favor of a regional school system and he feels that his rights have been short-changed. He feels that the District needs independent oversight. He holds the Board of Education responsible for the entire \$36 million budget and feels that adjustments can be made. He feels that the District uses students as hostages. He understands that the townspeople have a responsibility to provide an education for the children of the community, but it doesn't mean they have to be fleeced out of their funds.

There were no other questions or comments.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stengel, to adjourn to the referendum.

In favor of adjourning to referendum: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First