

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in special session on Monday, May 7, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 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.

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

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

None.

Next Board Meeting - May 16, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School

Approval of Agenda

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

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

Approval of Minutes

Dr. Veronesi explained that the minutes from the April 25th Student Achievement Committee meeting and the May 3, 2018 Utilization Committee meeting were not available.

B. April 25, 2018 - Community Information Session

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the minutes of the Community Information Session held on April 25, 2018, as presented.

Mr. Augur asked if anyone has tried to fill in the names of the public that were not identified and Mr. Moore explained that they did try but were unable to hear.

In favor of approving the minutes of the Community Information Session held on April 25, 2018, as presented: Mr. Augur, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor.

Committee Reports

A. Student Achievement Committee - April 26, 2018

Dr. Friedrich reviewed that they received a report from Mrs. DiMaggio on the Curriculum Council Institute. He asked Dr. Veronesi if PowerPoint presentations could be routinely included in meeting folders. Dr. Friedrich explained that the Curriculum Council Institute is the District's internal body for redoing curriculum and there are now templates at varying levels. A small group of people who will become trainers work at the highest level. Dr. Veronesi also added that the feedback from staff is that it has been some of the best professional development that they have ever had. Dr. Friedrich believes this is a system that will help teachers meet the requirements which are fairly complicated. Mr. Moore also reported that there is now a handbook and forms for development of all the different curricula.

Dr. Friedrich explained that they also saw student achievement data on testing done in the District. It included data from the same group in fall and winter and there had been pleasing improvement in the scores. There had also been more discussion about eliminating STAR and going to the new system.

They then talked about kindergarten screening where a new routine has been instituted and incoming kindergartners will have individual evaluations. The reason for that is not to pick who goes where, but so that the teachers know if there are students who need special help in particular areas. Mr. Roraback asked if data was available as to how many parents had their children attend the screening and Dr. Veronesi stated that mostly all parents attend kindergarten screening and thought it was probably 98 percent or higher. She also commented that most kindergarten screenings include gross motor, fine motor, basic language skills, cooperative play and parallel play.

Dr. Friedrich went on to report that they had a discussion about the Student Achievement Committee's role in considering the implications of school reconfiguration and they reached an agreement that they would all try to participate more in committees involved in that. Dr. Veronesi commented that they also talked about that in Utilization and once the grade configuration is decided, that seems like the appropriate time for the Student Achievement Committee to be working with the school-based committees at any design changes.

It was also announced that the next Strategic Visioning session would be on May 15th.

Dr. Veronesi then quoted Mr. Roraback's choice for the perfect program that Howard Kelley always described would be more ID-related, creative with open classrooms in the early years where it's very positive, but more structure applied in sixth grade on. Mr. Roraback stated that he remembers Mr. Kelley was very firm in his belief that that was really the best program for most kids.

Mrs. Geraci asked if Mrs. Heckler would still be part of the kindergarten screening and placement for next year and Dr. Veronesi stated that she would be involved with that and it is usually done in the spring.

B. Utilization Committee - May 3, 2018

Dr. Taylor reviewed that they had a long meeting where they talked about modified preK-5 and K-5 plans, known as Option D. The expenses would range from \$5 million to \$8 million, including some assumptions about reimbursement. They discussed options for cafeteria and gyms, but that will continue to be explored.

They also discussed reimbursement considerations and Dr. Taylor felt like they received information that he had not been aware of. It was explained that there was a very low probability that any reimbursement would be received from the state, regardless of whether Korn was taken off the books or not because

Lyman would still be there. Korn was noted to be a significant problem for any reimbursement. Dr. Taylor was a bit disheartened by this information and came away with the belief that it was unlikely that the District will get any reimbursement.

Dr. Friedrich stated that Dean Petrucelli had explained that there are no real hard and fast rules, but more judgment calls from the state. Dr. Friedrich also felt that it would be best to plan that there would not be any reimbursement. He also felt that that might be freeing since the District would no longer have to meet state standards for reimbursement and it might be easier to do planning. Dr. Friedrich was also surprised by the fact that Lyman would be considered empty for the purposes of reimbursement.

Dr. Veronesi felt that conversations about this issue in the past were far less definitive than they were last week. Mrs. Geraci also mentioned that she thought if they had information about the town's involvement with Korn that that could sway the state. Dr. Friedrich also mentioned that the District is invited to preview their plans with the state to get a direction. Dr. Veronesi also commented that Mrs. Neubig had spoken to the state back in December and the feedback she received was more stringent than what they had heard from Silver Petrucelli. Dr. Veronesi also recalled that a member of the public had brought up the Lyman issue. Mrs. Neubig also stated that the state told her that if the District was reorganizing the grade structure to improve the educational experience of the students that they will consider that and Lyman would not be a problem.

Everyone who was at the Utilization Committee meeting agreed that the message was quite different this time. Dr. Friedrich felt that the message was that reconfiguration for the purpose of improving education was no longer a consideration.

Dr. Taylor went on to report that they also learned about the technical difference between renovating as new and adding additional space. Mr. Moore explained that renovation-as-new means that the building needs to be stripped to the concrete and built new. That would be eligible for reimbursement, even with another building open.

Dr. Veronesi stated that there is a tentative meeting with the state on May 22nd, but Mrs. Neubig has not received confirmation of that yet. Silver Petrucelli will attend that meeting as well. Dr. Taylor also reported that Silver Petrucelli recommended that the District not go to the state with too many options and the Utilization Committee recommended they move forward with two options, Options A and D. Dr. Veronesi commented that someone had stated that Options A and D still underutilize the space in the high school. She believes they will need to weigh how important some of these variables are in the ultimate decision and thought they may need to look at how to better utilize the high school.

Dr. Taylor explained that Mr. Petrucelli stated that the state cares very little about programming and how it impacts students and really only care about the bottom line. Dr. Taylor felt that Option B may also need to be brought up to the State. Dr. Veronesi felt that it would be hard for the State to make a decision on what would be educational improvement.

Mr. Augur asked about MTA and if it would make sense to have that somewhere here rather than leasing space. Dr. Veronesi felt that that could absolutely be done, but the fact that the students are 18 to 21 and in a college atmosphere would need to be considered. She did feel that everything needs to be put on the table. Dr. Friedrich suggested that maybe space could be made accessible at the high school for seventh and eighth grade which parents and Board members would be comfortable with.

Dr. Friedrich also stated that the current time table for making decisions has been changed and it was agreed that there was no way to make a decision by June. Dr. Taylor agreed that the complexity of the reimbursement information will push out the decision-making process.

Dr. Taylor explained that they also got an update about Strategic Visioning and briefly discussed the initial survey results, mainly just to note that they are coming in. About 270 surveys had been returned, largely felt to be from parents. They also discussed the Community Information Session and they felt it went well. Dr. Taylor felt that the general theme was about taking more time to make this decision.

Mr. Roraback stated that he visited the Middlefield Post Office every day during the week the flyers went out and was a bit disheartened by how many were in the trash.

Dr. Veronesi's clearly heard at the Community Information Session the requests for better communication. The Utilization Committee felt that information should be put in the Town Times and Dr. Veronesi had reached out to them about that. They also talked about sending a newsletter to the townspeople with updates. The flyer will need to be more attractive than the survey and thus more expensive.

Dr. Taylor reported that Mr. Yamartino had brought up about having subcommittees to distribute the workload. The possible subcommittees include disposition of Lyman, bussing and financial considerations. There was general consensus to involve the Finance Committee as well.

The next steps for Utilization would be to meet with the state and also to identify the areas of concern for the next six to seven months. The next two Utilization meetings are on May 31st and June 28th. They also reviewed the presentation by the SRO. Mr. Moore reported that Trooper Cummings made a presentation about the SRO program and the role that they play in the school. The Town Times had the video of her presentation on their website. Mr. Moore recommended that, if the budget passes, that the SRO be pursued at the next Board meeting on May 16th. She had pointed out all the ways in which the SRO is involved with the students, including social media, and their advisory role. Mr. Hicks felt that her message was not only what her job is, but also what her job isn't. Mr. Hicks felt the SRO would be a resource for administrators, students, parents and teachers and that it is way beyond just having a police presence.

Dr. Veronesi had asked for an example of an MOU, but was told there was no example available as we are a regional school district but they would send a draft once it had been prepared. She hopes to receive that by May 16th for the Board to review. Mr. Moore felt that it would probably be four months before the District would have a decision and then a person would need to be available.

Mr. Augur asked if there had been public comment and whether or not Stephen Liss had been present at the meeting. Dr. Taylor explained that Maya Liss had attended the meeting, but not Stephen. Mr. Moore also reported that Carl Stoup had asked them to get going.

Public Comment

Carl Stoup stated that he had spoken to Silver Petrucelli and they agreed to look at the entire school system.

Adjournment

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

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

Meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First