

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, October 16, 2019 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, Durham, Connecticut.

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

Board members absent: Mrs. Caramanello and Mr. Hicks

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

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

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Moore added item 13B, the acceptance of a donation of a grand piano.

Mr. Roraback a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the agenda, as amended.

In favor of approving the agenda, as amended: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

Donia Viola, from Durham, thanked Kim Neubig for providing her some answers about the proposal for the gas agreement with Eversource. She distributed a copy of a letter she sent to the Hartford Courant. Mrs. Viola felt there are no guarantees in the Eversource agreement that would ensure the safety of those using the gas. She felt that gas has caused many explosions and claimed several lives. There has been no usage yet, so costs cannot be projected. Mrs. Viola felt that more thought needs to go into this and it is unnecessary at this time. She also noted that Korn School has a rate for a hook-up even though it is a closed school. Mrs. Viola felt that safety is more important than savings or costs.

Phil Augur, from Durham, spoke to item 13A, the Regional Plan Amendment, and stated that the Town of Durham has officially asked that the term lengths for Board of Education members so that elections can be held with municipal elections at the polls. He hoped that the board would consider that request.

Global Partnership

Brian Falcone brought a group of students, teachers and parents with him to help with the presentation about the partnership with Ningbo, China. There were three main goals, with the first being to have the students from Tongji High School experience as much of New England as possible. They took a trip to New York and Boston (paid by Tongji) as well as Yale University. They also went to the outlets to do a little shopping. The second goal was to immerse them into the culture and community and the third goal was to provide an opportunity for each student at Coginchaug to participate, if they wish. Participation could be hosting a student, traveling to Ningbo in March or participating in activities.

Jessica Stanwood hosted two students and will also be traveling to China. She explained that one of the students really broke and the ice and she was very excited to get to know them.

Jaden Astle participated in various activities with the exchange students. Andy Zhou also participated in activities and Mrs. Germond and Mr. Falcone gave him the opportunity to travel to China as well. Coginchaug hosted a potluck dinner the day after the students arrived and the faculty noticed that a lot of the exchange students were sitting separately. Mr. Falcone had put basketballs in the gym, so Jaden challenged a table of exchange students to a game. The exchange students were also here for the fall pep rally and homecoming dance.

Seth Overton attended activities with the students. They attended a barbecue at Bob Moore's house and played football, soccer and pool. The Chinese students also brought some of their cuisine, including a 1000-year-old duck egg. They all attended the homecoming dance as well and behaved just like our students, with the girls in one corner and the guys in the other. They also felt that the students goofed off just like the Coginchaug students. The students all downloaded WeChat and now have a group chat. Students from China participated in STEAM activities, including assembling a Lego car powered by elastic bands and making a machine that could pick up plastic pieces in a fish tank. The students created a remote-controlled motor boat with a net to pick up the plastic pieces. They felt that the hardest obstacle was communication, but they overcame it.

Mr. Falcone explained that the other schools in the district had interactive activities with the Chinese students as well as having them visit their schools.

Madison Burt is going to China and hosted two students this fall. She was a little disappointed that the Chinese students did not experience a lot of arts and music because they study so much. The students went to a pottery class and had a great time. They also had cooking activities, including American snacks and Chinese fried rice.

Noelle Sorensen was a host of two girls and feels that she has gained two sisters. She got to see them experience so many things, including the first time they tasted maple syrup. She also learned how to speak slower and simplify a bit. Sophia Hurlbert, an eighth grade student, also hosted an exchange student. She was surprised at how different the two cultures were, but has now formed a lifelong friendship.

Amy Sorensen was a host parent and is also a teacher in the district. Her host students were actually in the group that visited her school and, as a host parent, it was an amazing opportunity. She felt it was a beautiful bonding experience on all parts, including the neighborhood, the community and the exchange students.

Tina Hurlbert explained that she is a parent of two students in the district as well as being a teacher for over 10 years. As a mom and a teacher, she felt it was a privilege to host a student. She now feels a lot more confident about the future of humanity, after watching the bonds that were forged. She read from a note that her exchange student left that stated that they made her feel the warmth of family and that the town is now not a distant place, but a special place.

One of the students felt that he has truly gained a friend, one that he still texts and gets pictures and audio recordings from. He felt it was both happy and sad when the exchange student left. He has learned a lot more about what it means to be a part of humanity and part of the world as everyone is not really all that different.

Seth Overton became close with one of the teachers who was staying at his grandfather's and she taught them how to speak and write their names in Chinese. He noted that Steven was one of the most outgoing of the Chinese students and everyone hated to see him go. One of the students noted that the last time seeing the exchange students was more emotional than anyone had expected. They all felt that the Chinese students were more comfortable by the time they left and were upset to leave. They do remain in contact over social media and see how their days are.

One student noted that she was surprised to see how similar everyone was, even though they lived on the other side of the world. She felt that the time went by very quickly and she felt like she gained two new brothers. While they communicate over social media, she will miss having them around.

Mr. Falcone added that he could count on one hand the times in his career that he has been really touched and one of those was when they were in Ningbo after the contract was signed. The second time was the night before the students left. Mr. Moore spoke emotionally and one of their students spoke and then it went back and forth between students, teachers and parents. He noted how much the students from both schools and the school community grew. He thanked the board for taking the risk.

Mr. Moore thanked everyone for participating and commended them all for being so compassionate and helpful throughout this process. He couldn't be more proud of the students. He also noted that a great number of teachers were involved, but pointed out that Kate Germond organized everything and it wouldn't have been possible without her. Mr. Moore explained that the teacher that stayed with him teaches English in China and participated in English classes here as well.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education regular session meeting - September 11, 2019

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the minutes of the September 11, 2019 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of the September 11, 2019 meeting, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Next Board Meetings

- A. Special Session Board Retreat - October 23, 2019 at 5:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School**
- B. Regular Session Board Meeting - November 13, 2019 at 7:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School**

Progress Toward Strategic Coherence Goals: Portrait of the Citizen

Dr. Veronesi noted that she had reviewed some of the strategic improvement strategies with the board at the last meeting and tonight highlighted the areas that have progressed. The K-5 report cards are ready to be used and the movement towards project-based learning is underway. They also continue to work on supporting students with dyslexia. The development and implementation of the gifted and talented identification process and protocols is well underway as of last month.

Reviewing student achievement, they are focusing on the metrics that they look including growth measures. In terms of well-being, the partnership with Central continues with work focused at the middle school. Last Friday, the entire Strong faculty and staff was introduced to the concept of restorative practices. The equity work has been underway for over a year and the work with CERC has expanded. The proactive parenting series already has three series scheduled and an eMindful platform with ConnectiCare will kick off next week, focusing on various practices to increase mindfulness and good health.

The climate survey went out to parents two weeks ago and to staff this past week and will be distributed to students over the course of the next two weeks. Safety and security has been increased with new signs on campus asking people to refrain from being on the schools' campus during school hours, with the exception of the track.

Dr. Veronesi reminded everyone that the ETA for the first phase of the Portrait of the Citizen was October and it will be presented tonight. Mrs. Manning has begun to expand MTA to include college transitioning programming. Dr. Veronesi explained that the partnership with Middletown High School started with a book group that met for the first time on Friday.

They are working on designing and implementing a community and school personnel discussion forum regarding district priorities prior to the budget process. They will coordinate a communication session for the board to get feedback from people on November 6, 2019. Merrill and Chard Adams who were instrumental in the creation of the Plan of Regionalization will also be present to give the historical perspective on the creation of the district.

Regarding the Portrait of the Citizen, Dr. Veronesi explained that the intention this evening is to bring everyone up-to-date with the current progress. One part of this commitment is to stand behind the mission that our students become thriving and contributing global citizens. Another commitment is to equity and to being courageous enough to examine the issues and defend equity. They have also identified the skills, attributes and dispositions that students need in order to be successful. She has asked Lainy Melvin, who represented community members, to talk about the concept of equity and what it means to be a global citizen. Jenny Lussier was representing parents and staff and will talk about the process. Lynna Vo represented students, along with Justin Penney and she will talk about what it means to be a student in the district and what she feels the impact of this work will be.

A slide presentation was played that included the following knowledge, skills and dispositions:

Demonstrates compassion for self and others

- Understands and takes care of personal health and well-being
- Uses voice and choice to advocate for self and others
- Acts with empathy and kindness
- Takes initiative to learn about and understand others
- Appreciates and values all living things
- Demonstrates an understanding of and takes action to care for the environment

Thinks creatively and critically

- Asks questions
- Values curiosity and imagination
- Accesses a variety of resources from multiple perspectives
- Analyzes and evaluates information

- Formulates opinions based on evidence
- Uses inquiry and design processes
- Expresses thoughts, ideas and emotions through the arts
- Takes intellectual risks and solves problems
- Perseveres, reflects and revisits for an improved outcome

Demonstrates personal and social responsibility

- Understands and values their unique voice
- Accepts responsibility for personal decisions and actions
- Acts ethically and responsibly, including an understanding of and commitment to equity
- Recognizes and addresses one's own biases
- Demonstrates appreciation of and engagement in the local and global community
- Demonstrates a sense of agency linked to action
- Understands and practices financial literacy
- Demonstrates a strong work ethic

Communicates and collaborates

- Listens carefully and speaks respectfully
- Considers the perspective of others including feelings, ideas, opinions, and experiences
- Uses multiple modes of communication to engage, motivate, and influence
- Collaborates with others to create new ideas and solutions
- Recognizes and shares the success of the collaborative process

Lainy Melvin explained that she has been part of the community for over 50 years and was involved in preschool for many of those years and very active in the community. She was excited to be part of the coalition and was impressed at how quickly ideas came out. The stance on equity is looking ahead to what the future will involve and expect of our students. Mrs. Melvin felt that the involvement with the Chinese students has already made a difference and she thanked Dr. Veronesi for all of her efforts.

Jenny Lussier noted that she has been working in the district for 20 years and has lived in the community for 10 of those years. She has a freshman and a seventh-grader. She was very excited to be involved in this process and stated that they reviewed all of the survey information that was obtained from the community. She was appreciative to have Patrice Nelson from the Center for School Change help with the process as she kept the focus on the future. There were community members of all kinds, including business people, members of the Board of Education, parents, students and teachers. Mrs. Lussier felt that this product captures the essence of what they wanted, but there are still tweaks to be done.

Lynna Vo, a senior at Coginchaug, felt honored to have been part of this committee and was able to contribute a different perspective. She grew up in Meriden and moved to the district in seventh grade. She has since fallen in love with the community and noted that everyone is always willing to lend a hand. Volunteering and community are truly empowering and was something she wanted to see in the Portrait of the Citizen. She feels it will be amazing to see how all students in the district embody these attributes.

Dr. Veronesi explained that the next phase is move into school design teams to look at dispositions and attributes and determine how to support them. They will also look at the accountability measures. Dr. Veronesi will keep the board updated and this information will now be distributed to teachers, community members and students.

Mr. Moore thanked everyone for their participation in these efforts and looked forward to seeing how this will be implemented.

SBAC Presentation

Cori DiMaggio explained that she will be presenting the Smarter Balanced assessment scores and the NGSS preliminary scores tonight. The principals were present at the meeting to help share this story. She wanted to recognize the math and literacy coaches in the district, to thank the teachers for their efforts and acknowledge the administrators for their leadership.

Mrs. DiMaggio began with math achievement scores and explained that this is a rough cohort, meaning that they are students that are not matched from year to year. All cohorts made increases from 2015-2016 to 2018-2019. Achievement scores increased from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019 in grades 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8. There was a dip from 4 to 5 and the coaches looked deeply into that and addressed that through an action plan. It was noticed that in grades 3, 4 and 5, concepts and procedures dropped in the above average section. Concepts and procedures accounts for 50 percent of the Smarter Balanced test.

Mrs. DiMaggio then showed that the exceeded column is growing over time. This year, 38 percent of the district's students exceeded goal and 27 percent met goal vs. 31 percent and 29 percent last year. She then showed the district compared to state level and the DRG, noting that the district is above the DRG in math achievement. The state was 48 percent and the district was 65 percent in grades 3-8 and the DRG was 63 percent. Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that DRGs have not been updated since 2006, but the district ranks 13 out of 29. Last year, we were 17.

Smarter Balance is broken down into claims. English language arts includes reading, listening, writing and research and, in math, it's concepts and procedures, problem solving, modeling, data analysis and communicating reasoning.

Tom Ford summarized that the district is getting better at using student learning data to guide actions and the schools have used the SBAC as one guidepost. Specifically, school teams hone in on each claim and work to identify areas that need to be focused on. He reiterated that the concepts and procedures claim stood out as an area that needed improvement. They charted a course on how to address that with a plan that was consistent across schools, starting with a consistent delivery of the curriculum, aligning instructional efforts with those focus areas and the PLC process which continues to evolve. They are working with teachers on the implementation of strategy groups to target individual needs and making use of the iReady diagnostic tool. Mr. Ford does feel they have seen nice gains and he too complimented the teachers and the coaches.

Scott Sadinsky then went on to note that Strong School has specifically seen some strong growth. He also commended the teachers and students for their commitment. There has been a complete change in the way math is taught and he sees a remarkable change, with a new energy and excitement. The new curriculum was implemented last year and a full-time interventionist was at Strong School for the first time, along with a half-time coach. Mr. Sadinsky meets with the coach and gains a better understanding of what's happening. They use iReady lessons as well to address individual student needs. The schedule change at Strong has enabled the teachers to gain almost an hour of instruction per week and there is time dedicated for PLC meetings. They also aligned all math assessments directly to the standards and curriculum so each unit is purposeful.

Moving to the ELA achievement data, 71 percent of the district's students met goal in grades 3 through 8. There were increases in grades 4-5 and 7-8. The exceeds column is also growing in ELA, with 36 percent of students exceeding and 34 percent meeting goal, compared to 32 percent exceeding last year.

Mrs. DiMaggio then showed the district comparisons and the state was 58 percent, with the district at 71 percent and the DRG at 69 percent. The district was ranked 13 out of 29 and were 14 last year.

Deb Stone explained that Mrs. DiMaggio immediately analyzes the data and has the principals look at the data sets to find what the students need. The test shifts between grades 5 and 6. Mrs. Stone explained that once you are at the 6-8 band, the focus is on the informational band in the ELA testing. The teachers meet with the coaches weekly to review what the students need. They work to identify priority standards and develop a love of reading.

Mr. Sadinsky gave an example of how problems are identified and then approached and described how the standards change from sixth grade to seventh grade. He explained that the teachers work to bring the subtleties to light.

Mrs. DiMaggio then went on to review the preliminary scores for science which look very good. She gave credit to Susan Michael, Brenda Parness, Erica Anderson and all of the other science teachers. In grade 5, 76 percent of the district's students made goal, 75 percent in grade 8 and 65 percent in grade 11. They are tested on physical sciences, life sciences and earth and space sciences and after looking at the results, more work is needed in the life sciences area.

Growth is measured through growth rate and percentage of target achieved. Looking at the math growth rate, the trajectory is going in the right direction. There was a 54 percent increase in grades 4 through 8 which is an 8 percent increase from last year. Grades 6-7 experienced a 14 percent increase with a 36 percent increase in grades 7 to 8. The growth rate for grade 7 was 57 percent which is 30th in the state and grade 8 was 63 percent which is 17th in the state.

For the math percentage of target achieved, grades 4-8 was 75 percent which is an 8 percent increase from last year. There was a 35 percent increase from grades 7 to 8 and a 13 percent increase from 6 to 7. Grade 8 was ranked 6th in the state.

The ELA growth rate in grades 4-8 was 52 percent which is an 8 percent increase from last year. There was a 31 percent increase from grade 7 to 8. Grade 8 was ranked 4th in the state and grade 5 was ranked 7th. For the percentage of target achieved, grades 4-8 was 69 percent which is a 6 percent increase from last year. In grade 5, the average percentage of target achieved is 84 percent which is ranked 3rd in the state. Grade 8 was 76 percent and was 5th in the state.

Jennifer Keane reviewed that the state identifies high needs students as those that are English language learners, students who receive free and reduced lunch and/or special education students. The math growth rate was 3 percent from last year for the high needs students and the average percentage of target achieved was 2.4 percent. For students in special education exclusively, the growth rate in math was 3 percent and the average percentage of target achieved was 3 percent. Looking at ELA in the high needs student group, the growth rate was 3 percent and average percentage of target achieved was 3 percent as well. Looking at just special education students, the growth rate was 3 percent and the average percentage of target achieved was 2.5 percent.

Mr. Moore asked how big a challenge it is to almost parallel the growth rate of all the students with the students in the High Needs group. Mrs. Keane agreed that it is growing at the same rate and part of that is because ELL and free and reduced lunch students are included in the general population data as well. She noted that the district's targets were 3 percent growth rate and all of the special education students met that in both ELA and math. The high needs students met the target in ELA and approached it in math.

Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that the district is still working to complete the ELA curriculum and the K-3 word study curriculum. They are in the process of completing the Algebra I curriculum this year. Performance tasks will continue to be developed. Professional learning will be provided to further develop teacher capacity.

Deb Murray explained that instruction has become the focus since analyzing all of the data. They continue to work in the PLCs in each school. One instructional point this year is to implement Foundations in grade 3. They are continuing to implement and perfect strategy groups.

Mrs. DiMaggio added that they continue to use iReady lessons and the teachers were just presented with Seesaw as well as Newsela, both of which integrate technology to enhance learning. The use of the teacher toolbox through iReady continues as does extensive professional learning for reading interventionists. The interventionists and special education teachers are receiving training to become dyslexia specialists.

Mrs. Murray summarized that the principals are creating school learning plans that focus on the work that needs to be done to move the students forward. These plans have a focus in math and in literacy. The strategy groups hone in on skills and they are also working on effective feedback and student vocabulary and discourse. They have also implemented student data chats where students.

Mrs. DiMaggio summarized by explaining that they are in the process of revising the SRBI process.

Dr. Taylor commented that the work in this area over the last few years has been amazing.

At this point, Mr. Moore suggested a 15-minute break.

Committee Reports

A. Student Achievement Committee Meeting - September 18, 2019 (next meeting October 23, 2019)

Mrs. Petrella reported that they had had the SBAC presentation at their meeting.

B. Utilization Committee Meeting - September 19, 2019 (next meeting October 24, 2019)

Dr. Taylor reported that they discussed the amendment to the Regional Plan and the Brewster/Memorial alteration project. People have recognized more immediate needs at Memorial, including playground equipment, and how that might be incorporated. They agreed to continue on, recognizing that there may be needs for additional components.

C. Educational Resources Committee Meeting - October 16, 2019 (next meeting December 10, 2019)

Mrs. Geraci reported that the external audits seem to be going smoothly. They were given an update on the bond project and energy project update. There were approximately \$1.5 million in bonding projects that could go into the energy project, so they could decide to reduce the bonding or add other items. The energy project would be financed over 15 years, with a net cash flow savings of about \$264,000, though they will look at alternative financing as well. She also noted that there are some issues with the auditorium lighting and that may have to be included in the budget.

D. Building Committee Meeting - October 16, 2019

Mrs. Booth reported that there is really no update on the water project. The culvert is in progress and there is no new information on the field storage building. She believes they will create an RFP for an estimator and try to get estimates for the field storage building options.

Communications

Mr. Moore received a letter from Laura Francis asking the Board of Education to consider the change in member elections as part of the amendment to the Regionalization Plan.

Mrs. Booth had a few parents from Brewster reach out about the new food policy at Brewster and whether it was a district policy. They had been told that after November 1st, they can no longer bring in food for parties. She also had a parent reach out about the Strong girls' soccer where some changes have been made in coaching and the parents feel like they are not receiving proper communication. The kids don't seem to know if there is practice and if games are happening.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Veronesi reported that administrators meet every other Friday to work on transition planning, including staying on track with sixth grade going to Strong next year. They have also talked about possibly shifting next year's third graders from Brewster to Memorial. Dr. Veronesi thought it might be advantageous to do that when the sixth graders move. It will equalize the number of classrooms in the schools, with about 12 at Brewster, Memorial and Strong. She would like to be able to let parents know that this is being discussed.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned the playground equipment at Memorial and felt that it was something that needed to be discussed immediately. Mr. Moore suggested it be placed on the Utilization agenda. Mrs. Booth felt that they need to talk to the students about what they would like. Dr. Veronesi felt that was a great idea. She felt that the kids love the playscape at Lyman and that would potentially happen at Memorial as well. Mrs. Geraci mentioned having options for kids with all abilities.

Director of Finance's Report

Kim Neubig reviewed that 20 percent of the revenue has been received and expenditures are also at 20 percent. There is nothing unusual to report. They were able to purchase curtain and stage flooring that had been included in the capital budget request. MTA revenue to date is 12 percent and expenditures are at 13.5 percent. The auditors finished their field work on October 9th and will present the audit at a future ERC meeting. A module was purchased to interface with the financial software for automated timekeeping and a pilot is being run with the Central Office staff.

An unanticipated repair of an oil lift pump at Lyman cost \$4,500. There was a Pension Committee meeting on October 10th when Morgan Stanley representatives explained the fund activity. The committee decided that they should attend an ERC meeting with a potential investment change recommendation.

Final budget calendars and electronic budget preparation materials have been shared on the Google drive. Budget numbers are due back by December 13th. Town enrollment allocations based on October 1st, have been prepared and sent to the First Selectmen. Mrs. Neubig stated that Durham saw a decrease of .18 percent and Middlefield had that same increase, bringing the totals to 66.26 percent for Durham and 33.74 for Middlefield. Durham lost 46 students and Middlefield lost 19, for a total of 65 students in the district. Mr. Yamartino wondered what their projections had been as he thought it had been in the 50s and Dr. Taylor agreed that it was lower than 65.

New Business

A. Regional Plan amendment

Mr. Moore stated that he had drafted and sent a proposed report to everyone. The attorney has reviewed it and submitted a couple of minor edits. He read the recommended amendment into the record. “The Board of Education, pursuant to section 10-47.c of the Connecticut General States, proposes that the Regionalization Plan for Regional School District 13 be amended as follows: the Board of Education of Regional School District 13, notwithstanding the recommendations of the Temporary Regional School Study Committee of 1967 for the towns of Durham and Middlefield, is authorized to determine the programs and facilities required to best serve the students of the district as established, including the alteration, expansion or closure of district school buildings.” Mr. Moore summarized that this is a minor change from the current language and added the alteration, expansion and closure.

“Additionally, the Regional School District 13 will maintain at least one active school in both towns of Durham and Middlefield that educate students of determined grade levels. The Board of Education will hold at least one public hearing to receive input from both Durham and Middlefield communities before determining the programs and facilities required to best serve the students of the district as established, including the alteration, expansion or closure of district school buildings.”

Mr. Moore explained that Mrs. Petrella had recommended that language. She had also recommended that a referendum be held before closure of a school, but he did not include that in the proposal. His feeling is that that is done through the normal budget process and referendum.

Mr. Moore reviewed that Laura Francis had sent a letter about the election of board members and he recommended that “the Board of Education, pursuant to 10-47.c of the Connecticut General Statutes, proposes that the Regionalization Plan for Regional School District 13 be amended as follows: the election of Board of Education members from the Town of Durham shall be in the manner as prescribed by section 2.1.c and 6.1 of the Town of Durham Charter and serve a term of four years. The Board of Education shall adopt a procedure for the adjustment of existing terms of office of the current Durham board members in accordance with the procedures defined in section 6.1 of the Durham Charter and approval and adoption of the Regionalization Plan Amendment.”

Mr. Moore summarized that those are the two proposed amendments and would also include a history of the plan as well. He hoped to have a discussion on these proposed amendments tonight so that it can be voted on at the November meeting. Once approved by the board, it would go the State Board of

Education for their approval, followed by a public hearing and a referendum in both towns. He noted that he did not include a change in elections for Middlefield as it is not in their charter nor did the First Selectman request a change. That would remain a three-year term with elections in May.

Dr. Taylor noted that the board did have the authority to make it the same for both towns. He did have an issue with the two towns' representatives being elected through completely different processes. He was concerned that there will be a perceived difference in the election of the members and their status on the board. Dr. Taylor's second issue is with the length of the term and that Middlefield would be three years and Durham would be four. He also believes that the board has maintained a nonpartisan character and feels that potential language to ensure that would need to be included. In Durham, there are restrictions on minority party representations, but no such language exists for the Board of Education. He wondered if an amendment to the Town Charter would be necessary to keep everything aligned. Dr. Taylor does believe that it is better to have more people vote, but that they need to be careful about how that impacts the board.

Mrs. Petrella agreed as far as the length of the terms and felt that Middlefield board members' terms should also be four years. As far as how board members are elected, she does not believe that both towns have to be the same and she felt that Middlefield should decide that for themselves.

Dr. Friedrich asked why Mrs. Petrella felt that everyone's term should be the same and she felt that it would be confusing in terms of people coming and going. Mrs. Geraci felt the way the members are elected would be more confusing than the length of the terms. Mrs. Petrella also felt there was an experience factor too. Dr. Friedrich noted that there are varying levels of experience right now and not all terms are fulfilled, with new people coming in to fill out a vacant term. He does not feel that the variety has been a disadvantage. Dr. Friedrich did feel that the board needs people like him, with an historical perspective, and also needs new people with new ideas. He felt that the only issue would be keeping track of the schedules, but the towns would be responsible for that.

Mr. Yamartino felt that the state legislature has left it pretty clear that it is left up to the governing body of each community to determine the method of election. He believes that that not only includes the method of election, but the term of office as well. From his personal experience, he may not have run for the Board of Education if he had had to go through the campaigning and election process. He added that four years is a long commitment. He strongly urged the board to go with the proposed amendment made by Mr. Moore.

Mr. Moore added that he would like to discuss the issue of partisanship with the town's attorneys or registrars to see if there could be a line for the Board of Education without a party affiliation. He agreed that the board is nonpartisan and has never acted otherwise. Mr. Yamartino agreed. Dr. Friedrich would also like to make sure that it doesn't become a political party contest.

Dr. Taylor had large concerns about people who campaign and win election to the board by 2,000 votes and how they would react with someone else on the board winning election by 10 votes. He felt that they should think very hard about the long-term viability of the board. He would strongly encourage the board to exercise their right that was granted in the initial regional plan to maintain the consistency of the members. Mr. Yamartino added that the state legislature granted the right to each individual town to determine the method of election.

Mr. Moore asked the board members to send him their comments on the draft proposal and hoped to be able to vote on this at the November meeting.

Mr. Yamartino asked if legal counsel could review the wording about adjusting the current terms as he wasn't sure that was the board's responsibility to do that. Dr. Friedrich felt that they should ask Middlefield if they want to elect their board members in the same manner. Mr. Moore explained that the amendment to the Regional Plan would need to pass in both towns at referendum. Mr. Yamartino felt that it wouldn't be up to the Board of Selectmen, but rather a town meeting. There was further discussion between Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino about how members should be elected.

Mrs. Geraci felt that this board is different from individual town boards and commissions as it is a regional board. She felt that the elections should be done by the same method for both towns and it should be all or nothing. Mr. Moore explained that this charter revision was done in 2006 and the board still has not acted on that.

Again, Mr. Moore asked everyone to bring any proposed amendments to the document for the next meeting. Mrs. Petrella asked if the entire plan would be replaced and Mr. Moore explained that it will be a full report, but just the parts being amended would be new. Mrs. Petrella felt it would be important to keep the original in place. She also felt that closing a school should be done by referendum because otherwise the board would have complete autonomy for programs and school closures and the only recourse the public would have is a public hearing. She added that a referendum is more weighted towards Durham because they have more people even though only 8 to 12 percent of townspeople vote on budget referendums. Again, she reiterated that she would like the language included that a referendum be held and approved by both towns for any school closures. Dr. Taylor felt that it was a conflict to give the board the authority to close a school, but then require a referendum. Mr. Moore felt that the original committee had anticipated that change would happen over time and provided that authority to the board. He also added that his father-in-law was the chairman of the original study committee in 1967. Mrs. Booth felt that including the closure of a school in the budget referendum could put the budget in jeopardy.

B. Acceptance of a donation of a grand piano

Dr. Veronesi explained that Parents of Performers would like to donate a Young Chang baby grand piano valued at \$1,500. A resident of Middle Haddam is moving and needs to sell the piano. POPs will purchase the piano and donate it to the Music Department for daily use, rehearsals, concert performance and other engagements.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Geraci, to accept the donation of a Young Chang baby grand piano from Parents of Performers.

In favor of accepting the donation of a Young Chang baby grand piano from Parents of Performers: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Moore thanked POPs for their donation.

Public Comment

Donia Viola thanked the board for their time and noted that the awareness of the environment had been pointed out under the Progress Toward Strategic Coherence Goals and hoped that everyone was aware of what was being done to the air and to the water with fossil fuels. She asked for her letter to be included in

the record of tonight's meeting. She also noted that the principal from John Lyman School pointed out not having rote memory and she felt that the kids would run out of fingers. She felt that multiplication and division tables are very important and are basics. Mrs. Viola felt that the focus seems to be more on the computer than the classroom in kindergarten and up. She hasn't seen fun as a fundamental for education. The teacher is in charge, guiding gently to make it happen. Going back to her original letter, she felt that maintenance has been an issue for quite a few years and she is uncomfortable with the district assuming maintenance of the Eversource equipment with the new agreement.

Mark Salley, from Durham, has a daughter in seventh grade who is on the soccer team. He came tonight because he wanted to ask about communication and transparency. As a parent, he gets a notification at 8:00 on a Tuesday morning from Mr. Sadinsky, telling the parents what he's allowed to and speculation takes over. He doesn't know what to say or not say to his daughter. Parents call Mr. Sadinsky and he can't say very much. Mr. Salley felt that transparency and communication is very important. He thought that maybe a meeting with the parents would help.

Phil Augur, from Durham, enjoyed the debate on the Regional Plan Amendment. He did feel that board members look at each other differently based on experience and didn't think that the length of term or method of election would be any different.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First

Fuel Conversion in RSD 13 schools

From: Paul D Viola (paul.viola@frontier.com)

To: letters@courant.com

Date: Friday, September 20, 2019, 11:07 AM EDT

To the editor:

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education has acted to convert its schools' heating systems from oil to natural gas or another method. An agreement has been signed already by the superintendent with Eversource to provide natural gas to two schools.

Real savings may never be recognized since removal of existing infrastructure and setup for new design can be costly. Loss of competitive bidding - current option for oil delivery.

Eversource will not have any competition.

Natural gas leaks methane, one of the most damaging greenhouse gases. It leaks in the extraction, transport, and burning processes. Carbon escapes into our air from operating plants. Old and failing equipment can cause a deadly explosion. Lives have been lost!

Perhaps the BOE overlooked the gravity of the situation before reaching their decision and ignored the research showing that the time is now to consider wind power/additional solar panels to be used as alternatives to service the schools' energy needs.

The fallout of the proposed change will ultimately impact future generations and it is up to the communities to protect them from the slightest risk of harm. Please contact your selectpersons, superintendent, and BOE members to nullify the plan recently adopted.

Sincerely,

Donia Viola
Durham, CT

(860)349-0738

Sm,