

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

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

Board members absent: Dr. Taylor

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

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Hicks asked to make an addition, number 9a, Ocean Bowl discussion.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to amend the agenda.

In favor of amending the agenda: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

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

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

Public Comment

Karen Buckley, from Durham, thanked the Board for adding the Ocean Bowl to the agenda. She has agreed to apply and serve as the advisor this year and Mrs. Martin has agreed to help in the process. The challenge this year is that the Ocean Bowl competition is in Massachusetts. She explained that she is not a certified teacher in the district, but hoped that they would be able to do an overnight for the competition.

Donia Viola, from Durham, once again shared her concerns about the gas conversion. She spoke with someone at Eversource who understood her concerns over the fact that there had never been a presentation to the public about this. Mrs. Viola would like the board to accommodate the residents and taxpayers of both towns with a public hearing to get questions answered and costs outlined.

Theresa Weimann, from Durham, asked the board to continue their pledge for full transparency and noted that she was surprised to hear the same comments repeated at the Community Conversation meeting and in the newsletter. She would like the board to think about the children before anything else when it comes to the reconfiguration.

Richard Parmelee, from Durham, noted that he has been a voter in Durham since 1965 and stated that the six people from Durham that sit on the board will vote on his rights to access voting tonight. He does not feel that it should continue the way it is now, at town meeting. He recalled that there had been a big effort in the community to keep the Board of Education nonpartisan.

Carl Stoup, from Durham, felt that the Town of Durham spoke several years ago about how they wanted the voting to be done and he felt that that should be followed through on. He respects the rights of Middlefield to vote their members in the way they'd like.

CRHS Reporters - Ava Kowal, Joshua Mann, Nicholas Vestergaard

Ava Kowal reported that the boys' soccer team has been having a good season. They qualified for Shorelines and States and have won the first round of their tournament. The girls' soccer team is also doing very well and qualified for Shorelines and States, winning their first round. The football team is 4-3 this year and will qualify for States if they win their next three games which would be the first time since 2011. Boys' and girls' cross country teams also qualified for Shorelines and States and the girls' team placed in the top 10 at States. Girls' volleyball qualified for both Shorelines and States as well and won their first two rounds.

Joshua Mann reported on the Veterans Day celebrations in the district, including playing taps at the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce, on the Durham green, at Memorial Middle School and tomorrow at the Elks Club. In school, the a cappella group sang the National Anthem over the announcements on Veterans Day and all of the social studies classes wrote letters to veterans, thanking them for their service. DECA is having a food and personal hygiene products drive for veterans.

Nicholas Vestergaard could not attend the meeting tonight, so Joshua Mann reported on the Washington, DC trip. He is looking forward to Arlington National Cemetery, seeing the White House and the Capitol building as well as the various museums.

Mr. Moore added that the boys' and girls' soccer teams both won their second-round games, but the girls' volleyball team lost tonight. He also thanked Joshua for playing taps.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education regular session meeting - October 16, 2019

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2019 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of the October 16, 2019 meeting, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried, with Mr. Hicks abstaining.

B. Board of Education special session retreat - October 23, 2019

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2019 meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of the October 23, 2019 meeting, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Next Board Meeting - December 10, 2019 at 7:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School

The Lyman concert is that evening from 6:30 to 7:30, so they will try to change the time of the meeting to 7:30.

Progress Toward Strategic Coherence Goals: Portrait of the Citizen

Dr. Veronesi noted that they are still in progress on finalizing the SRBI protocols as well as the PLC data chats and instructional rounds. Strong School had a consultant from ACES work with the team on restorative practices and she will be back in both February and March. They have also talked about expanding the programming at the Career Center at Coginchaug and they are preparing for changes in another year on work protocol. The Career Exploration class is in its second year, with 77 students enrolled in the first and second semester.

The climate survey has been distributed and they have begun analyzing the results. The communication network has been expanded, most notably with the Community Conversation that was held last week. They are also continuing to work on the HOT approach integration. There is an opportunity to apply for a \$450,000 grant through the National Science Foundation over three years. This grant would integrate STEM learning and arts integration. The focus will be on the third to fifth graders at Memorial School to enhance the visiting artist program there.

Dr. Veronesi also reported that the Discussion Forum has been implemented and she will share the budget priorities with the board members. She was very pleased to see the priorities align across the board, administration and public groups.

Committee Reports**A. Student Achievement Committee Meeting - October 23, 2019 (next meeting November 20, 2019)**

Mrs. Petrella reported that they were shown the math curriculum which was developed in-house by the teachers and coaches and is continually being revised. They also talked about the NEASC update for accreditation of the high school which is done every 10 years. For 2020, NEASC has narrowed the standards down to five, with a total of 32 indicators. The committee will come to visit in 2024. They also received an update on enrichment and a number of things are already in place, including after-school clubs and activities, but they are looking to have more of these activities done during the day. The program will be expanded into athletics, arts and music. Mrs. Petrella also noted that project-based learning will be geared more toward enrichment for students as well.

B. Utilization Committee Meeting - October 24, 2019 (next meeting November 21, 2019)

Mr. Yamartino reported that they discussed a number of items, including their approach to the disposition of Korn School. They hope to have a town planner at the next meeting to offer some options. They also discussed the method for voting board members and whether or not to support Durham's request for voting at elections and four-year terms as well as how best to handle Middlefield. They also discussed the referendum questions and moving forward for the bonding that will be reviewed later tonight.

C. Well-Being Committee Meeting - October 29, 2019

Mrs. Caramanello reported that Amy Schaefer wrote an article about PAUSE and restorative practices and they talked at length about that. She had described restorative practices as “liking who you are in the moment” for kids and teachers. PAUSE is an acronym for pausing, becoming aware, understanding what you’re feeling, strategies and experiment.

Mrs. Manning shared the ConnectiCare wellness initiative, eMindful, through the Thought Exchange program with the district’s staff. There had been a challenge to win a gift card. Members of the committee had wonderful things to share about the Chinese students’ visit and the hope is to broaden that program in the future. The Well-Being Committee hopes to meet again on December 17, 2019 when they hope to review the climate survey results.

Communications

Mr. Moore received a note from Kim Garvis, the Town Clerk from Durham, supporting the change in the voting and what the process would be in changing the terms. He also received a note from Jon Scagnelli in support of the elections. Lisa Szymaszek and Karen Buckley wrote about the Ocean Bowl. Jen Zettergren wrote about a fund-raiser for Project Graduation and Michelle DiMauro wrote about the field house.

Mr. Moore also reported that he met with a gentleman who is the head of a private Pre-K-12 school in Portland, Maine. Their program is very similar to what is at Lyman and also looks at making their students global citizens. They require Latin for every student in sixth grade and then they have choices (Latin, French, Spanish and Mandarin) after that. They also have an exchange program with China as well as a big program on equity. Their classrooms are very open, warm and light and there is not as much structure in the room configuration.

Mr. Moore thanked Merrill and Richard Adams for giving the history of regionalization at the Community Conversation. Mrs. Geraci commented that she received a lot of good feedback from people who enjoyed that type of forum. Mr. Roraback added that he had been part of the first open class and explained how they learned. Dr. Friedrich felt that the structure of allowing public comment with no response needs to be augmented in that type of forum. He felt that people were more included and that more of that is needed. Dr. Veronesi suggested that another Community Conversation be scheduled in the spring prior to the budget referendum.

Mr. Moore also added that the newsletter has also been sent out. Dr. Veronesi explained that the Regionalization Plan amendment has to be filed with the state, but not approved, and that was incorrectly noted in the newsletter.

Mrs. Booth stated that she attended the veterans’ assembly at Lyman that incorporated the entire school. She felt it was powerful and she really enjoyed it. Mr. Moore felt that the celebration at the town green with 200 students from Strong School was emotional as well. Dr. Veronesi explained that the assembly at Memorial was entirely student-run and part of the program was to read excerpts from letters from servicemen. Brewster School also did a Veterans Day assembly and a large number of veterans attended. Dr. Veronesi reminded everyone that they had reached out to veterans before deciding to have school on Veterans Day.

Mrs. Geraci also noted that she attended the POPs clothing drive and it was very well-received. She also felt that the Craft Fair was very well-organized. Mrs. Geraci stated that her daughter's bus driver is a veteran and he brought in a picture of him in the Army.

Mr. Hicks stated that he will attend the CABA/CAPSS Convention on behalf of ACES, but will also do networking for the district as well. He is also on the Nutmeg Board of Education.

Ocean Bowl

Dr. Veronesi thanked Karen Buckley for her review of the Ocean Bowl situation and for offering to be the advisor. She noted that the district does have some non-school employees who are paid a stipend to work with some of the students. Dr. Veronesi noted that they did not budget for what could be about \$2,000 for a bus to send six students to Massachusetts, so they are looking at other methods of transportation as well as getting a certified staff who will attend overnight. The competition will be held at MIT on February 29, 2020. This will be brought to the board in December for approval.

Vote to approve Regionalization Plan amendments

Mr. Moore had distributed a copy of the report that the board will approve tonight. The first section talks about the need to amend the report to be clear that the board has the authority to close a school. It goes through some history and changes that have been made since 1968. He read the proposed language which includes the authorization for the alteration, expansion or closure of district school buildings. It also noted that the district will maintain at least one active school in both towns. The board will host at least one public hearing before determining these issues. Mr. Moore reminded everyone that these requirements were imposed by the Bond Counsel.

The second part talks about the changes in the election and terms of office for board members. It proposes that the election of board members from the Town of Durham shall be in the manner described in their Town Charter, with a term of four years.

Mr. Moore reviewed that the board needs to vote to accept the report, as a whole, and then act on what will happen next. After approval, it will be filed with the State Department of Education and public hearings will be set. They will also need to develop the language and dates for the referendum, hopefully in January. If the referendum is successful, they will then have to determine the process for changing the terms of the Durham members. Dr. Veronesi added that the district's attorney has the Durham board members' terms as well.

Mr. Moore explained that Dr. Taylor had asked what would happen if the referendum failed and Mr. Moore felt that they would want to find out why and which issue was the problem. He reviewed that the board has spent several years determining the best program for the students and have paid attention to the fiscal needs of the communities as well as the buildings' capabilities to meet the educational needs. The board voted to move ahead with a single program approach last January.

Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, to approve the report, as amended.

Dr. Friedrich asked who writes the referendum questions and Dr. Veronesi explained that the attorney will do that and there will be two or three questions. Dr. Friedrich then asked if the board will get to see the text of the referendum questions before it goes to the public. Dr. Friedrich reviewed that the

Commission of the State Board of Education will receive the report and acknowledge receipt of it. Mr. Moore explained that there would then be a public hearing and establish the referendum language and the date of the referendum. Dr. Friedrich confirmed that that would be when the board would approve the context of the questions and how they are organized.

Mrs. Booth asked if both questions have to pass and Mr. Moore thought that the plan could be amended if one did not. She had heard some comments specifically regarding the voting of board members. Each question has to pass in both towns, but they can move forward with one amendment.

Dr. Veronesi will verify if there would need to be three questions, one for the manner of election and one for the term as well as the building closure issue. Dr. Friedrich also asked if the board even had a choice to offer the option of general election for Durham members and Mr. Moore stated that their attorney has indicated that if the town has asked, they need to proceed. Mrs. Booth felt that it would fabulous to someday have a campus and that may mean that there would not be an active school in both towns. Dr. Friedrich felt that the board would need to go through the same process again at that time.

Mrs. Petrella asked about the requirements for representation based on population and felt that it was never clearly defined how the board changed from 5-5 to 6-4. She felt that if the requirement was a state statute, it should be cited. Dr. Veronesi explained that the attorney, in his memo of October 8, 2019, had referenced sections 10-47c and 10-63j which deal directly with the district's board representation. She also noted that in 2002, the Commission of Education reached out to the district about the change in representation based on the population. Mr. Hicks added that it wasn't necessarily the number of people, but the actual voting. They could have kept the number of board members the same, but had weighted voting. Mr. Moore added that the district policy 9110 was amended on November 13, 2002 to set up the new numbers as well.

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to amend the report to include State Statute citations.

In favor of amending the report to include State Statute citations: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Geraci asked about party affiliations and Dr. Veronesi noted that anyone elected will have to be affiliated with a party, but an independent could also run, they cannot run as "Board of Education party" which was asked. Mr. Moore added that there are no requirements for minority representation.

Mr. Yamartino read the portion of the report, under authority, into the record. "The Temporary Study Committee, after studying the need and benefit, made the following recommendations: that Durham and Middlefield cooperatively administer the entire educational system, kindergarten through 12; that the new regionalization system be organized on an elementary, middle and high school basis; that children attend elementary and middle schools remain in their present locations; and that a four-year high school be constructed on site presently available in Durham." He wanted to be sure that everyone understood that the report further describes the initiation of the district following approval of the referendum. It also states that "it must be emphasized again that, within the broad limits of the proposal which is prescribed by law, the regional Board of Education would determine the programs and facilities of the regional district. Logically, the board could be expected to give due consideration to the recommendations of the

Study Committee, but is not legally bound by that.” Mr. Yamartino felt that it was clear, in 1967, that they anticipated that the district would grow and change over time.

Mr. Hicks asked if pre-K should be added to that language and Mr. Moore stated that pre-K was not available at the time of regionalization. Mr. Yamartino reviewed that the district had already moved students out of their present location when the two distinct programs were developed. Schools have been closed and facilities have been adjusted over the past 50 years.

Mr. Moore stated that the amended version of the report will be put online. Hearing no further discussion, Mr. Moore called for a vote on the motion.

In favor of adopting the report with the two recommendations of changes to the plan, as amended: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Dr. Veronesi will let the bond counsel know that this was approved tonight and the next steps, with the date of the referendum, can be developed. Mr. Moore hopes to have a public hearing in December. Dr. Veronesi also explained that the application to the state for the building alteration projects has been withdrawn at this time.

Superintendent’s Report

A. Budget Priorities and Parameters

Dr. Veronesi reported that she took feedback from the board during the retreat, administration, staff, parents and the community and tried to organize into five or six distinct categories.

In the area of human resources, the board’s priority is to make sure that the district attracts and retains high-quality faculty and staff and offset the salaries with other cost-saving methods. Dr. Veronesi reported that the teachers’ union unanimously ratified the proposed contract this afternoon and thanked the board members who were part of those negotiations. The board has also talked about an inventory of staffing and the administrative team tries to make staffing decisions on the district’s vision. Those decisions are being made to assist with student transitions and well-being, enrichment programming and some specialized support, including special education, well-being, school anxiety and support for students with dyslexia. Parents would like the district to maintain appropriate class sizes at all levels.

In the area of capital planning, significant strides have been made in terms of developing a long term plan and adhering to it. The board’s priority is to move forward with Brewster and Memorial alterations and the administrative team and staff feel the same way. They also want to continue to focus on energy efficiency. The need for playground equipment has also been talked about for next year. They have also talked about furniture and may want to have someone look at the physical plant to develop a long-term plan for furniture. The principals would also like playground equipment for elementary schools and appropriate furniture.

Dr. Veronesi noted that they had an information session yesterday with the State Police about active aggressors and it identified that one of the most important things that the district can do is to make sure that protocols are updated and that there is sufficient practice.

In the area of student achievement, the expansion of STEAM, tech, robotics and world language in sixth grade is all important. Some parents felt that the arts and music department needed greater technology integration. Dr. Veronesi did reach out to the department heads in music and art and they felt that the district is on top of that and is where we should be. In music, it will be important to maintain staffing levels so that a broader support to students is offered. Enrichment programming is a priority across all three stakeholder groups. They are taking the work from the Portrait of the Citizen and developing how it would look in Pre-K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12 with school-based design team work to begin soon. Personal Finance courses for high school students also came up in the Portrait of the Citizen work as well as being raised by parents at the Community Conversation.

Mr. Yamartino mentioned that a report came out today stating that students exposed to civics at a heavier level in high school can use the system as adults or change it. Dr. Veronesi stated that a parent had made a point as well at the community conversation relative to our goal in supporting global citizenship.

In well-being, the common theme is enhancement of student and staff well-being, with a priority placed on the area of mental health and alternative education support.

In the area of engagement, they have talked about the different types of sensory support for students with unique physical and learning needs and that this needs to be considered in the school alteration plans. That would also include appropriate playground equipment. All three stakeholder groups felt that outdoor learning is important as are global partnerships. The administrative team would like to see unified sports expanded to the elementary school and Dr. Veronesi felt that everyone would agree on that. The work on equity should continue and the community really felt that cursive, keyboarding and social studies are important focus points. Parents also brought up attracting and retaining students and families in the district.

Dr. Veronesi noted that the board is committed to presenting a responsible budget and to discuss the budget items in an effective and efficient manner. The administrative team feels that the budget will be aligned with the Strategic Coherence Plan goals and the school learning plans. Focus needs to be put on how everything is communicated to all stakeholders.

Dr. Veronesi will share her slides with all of the board members.

Mr. Moore stated that the board will vote on the teachers' contract on December 10, 2019 and a copy will be sent out to the board members.

Dr. Veronesi noted that a couple of things have come to the top with the discussion about grade level reconfiguration, teachers, transportation and time. The hope is still to move sixth grade to Strong School for the start of next year and she would like to have an open discussion and vote at the December meeting. Once sixth grade is moved to Strong School, that would leave Memorial with fifth-grade classes from both programs and a fourth grade class coming from Brewster. Because Memorial will ultimately be 3-5 intermediate school, the administration's recommendation is that third graders from Brewster begin attending Memorial next year as well. That would mean that the current second graders at Brewster would move to Memorial and would remain there for third, fourth and fifth grades. Dr. Veronesi felt that this would provide an opportunity to plan what the intermediate school would look like, what staffing and programming would be required and she also noted that Brewster is currently at capacity in terms of space. There will be an additional second grade next year at Brewster, so if third grade moves to

Memorial, that would only free up two classrooms, but this additional space would be very beneficial for other related services that are currently in shared spaces.

The other part of this process is complex in terms of staffing and support for students, custodial help and minimizing the disruptions. Dr. Veronesi felt that these two moves would help. Some questions from parents have been if some teachers could transition with the students as well and Dr. Veronesi felt that that would have to happen. Another question about staffing is perhaps having some special education teachers and supportive staff members who are shared between buildings or move with the students to Memorial.

With regard to transportation, people are concerned about sixth graders with high schoolers on the bus. Dr. Veronesi stated that they are addressing that. If third graders go to Memorial School, they will have to take an earlier bus as well.

Board members and parents have brought up the fact that that Lyman 5th grade students will only spend a year at Memorial for the next two years. The administration is not concerned about that and feels that they can support students, but they do realize it is a concern for some parents and may be for some students as well. They are looking at how best to address those concerns, including talking about whether it would be feasible to have third and fourth graders at Lyman stay there for their fifth grade year. They would then go directly to Strong for sixth grade. The space is available at Lyman and the idea is being discussed. Dr. Veronesi thanked Mrs. Booth for bringing this idea forward.

Dr. Veronesi explained that it would be multiple cohorts from Lyman that would have one year at Memorial, including this year's fifth graders (who are currently at Memorial), next year's fifth graders and the following year's fifth graders. She reiterated that it is not a concern for the administrative team that this will harm students, however she does recognize the parents' concerns. Dr. Veronesi did note that this could have a staffing impact, with four teachers needed at Memorial if all fifth graders go there. Mrs. Geraci hoped that there could be more clarity on this at the December meeting. Dr. Veronesi did not know if there could be definitive options available by December, but will try to come as close as possible. Mrs. Booth noted that she would see the transition as a bridge for the students for the time of day school starts.

Mr. Yamartino asked if it would be possible to move Lyman third and fourth grades to Memorial and Mrs. Booth stated that that would create a big riot. Dr. Veronesi explained that that could be done, but did not believe it should be.

Dr. Veronesi will set up a Google doc for board members to provide ideas and questions.

Director of Finance's Report

Mrs. Neubig reviewed that 37 percent of the revenue has been received in the general fund with 28 percent expended. Two large payments were made in October, including the district pension contribution of \$253,000 and property insurance for \$100,000.

MTA revenue is at 26 percent and expenditures are at 19 percent. Mrs. Neubig received the draft financial statements for the 2018-2019 audit and they are scheduled to present at the February ERC meeting.

The \$4,500 repair of the boiler at Lyman has not been done yet. Brewster had no heat on Veterans Day and Mr. Croteau went up on the roof and got it up and running, for just \$600. If that system had actually failed, it could have been easily six figures to replace.

Public Comment

Theresa Weimann, from Durham, thanked Dr. Veronesi and Mrs. Booth for advocating for the Lyman fourth graders to stay at Lyman. She also mentioned the costs that are being incurred for elementary school field trips. There is an upcoming field trip that is \$40 for the student and \$15 for a chaperone and she feels like that is a lot of money. She felt that it would be a good budget priority to add some money into more funding for field trips. Mrs. Weimann is happy to hear about the grant for arts integration and STEAM and hopes that it goes throughout the district and not one age group. She also hopes there is a focus in the budget on enrichment programs.

Donia Viola felt that Dr. Veronesi's explanation of the Strategic Coherence Goals was quite comprehensive. She asked that the board consider a bit less in the way of programming because she would not want to see the budget get voted down because of program offerings that aren't really an enhancement for current programs.

Adjournment

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

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

Meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First