

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, February 26, 2020 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, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.

Administration present: Dr. Serino, 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 Agenda

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

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

Public Comment

Donia Viola, from Durham, had some issues she wanted to address from the 2/12/20 minutes. Mrs. Viola fails to see how having the energy savings project attributed to buildings and grounds supplies and not to the actual closing of Korn School, because she thought that was where the largest savings was garnered. She also wanted to know where the \$4.5 million figure to keep John Lyman open came from. She did not recall numbers for anything other than upkeep for fuel tank or replacement well. She wondered, with contractual agreements increasing for buildings and grounds construction, if the public should expect that to be a reliable figure. If enrollment doesn't justify keeping the school open, she would like to see the board have the wherewithal to take a stand and perform for all of the residents of both communities. If closing the school makes the most sense and curbs spending but still allows for proper education of the students, then that is what should happen. She also commented about test scores being determined differently every couple of years and understands how difficult it is to make comparisons. She felt that should be addressed with the state. Mrs. Viola will speak to the board again at the end of the meeting.

Jim Irish, from Middlefield, applauded the proposal that the district made for 95 percent funding of the staffing line item which is in line with historical results and will save the taxpayers the typical surplus. Secondly, he mentioned the +2 FTE in staffing that is being proposed and explained that there is room for additional reductions. He feels that three additional teachers can be removed and still retain the target class sizes, a Lyman 1/2 teacher, a Lyman 3/4 teacher and a Memorial fifth grade teacher. He urged the board to challenge the administration to see if something like that could be done and save the taxpayers over \$100,000 per individual, or \$300,000 which is one-third of the net increase in the proposed budget.

Approval of Minutes**A. Board of Education regular session meeting - February 12, 2020**

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2020 regular session meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of the February 12, 2020 regular session meeting, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Taylor. Motion carried, with Mr. Yamartino abstaining.

Next Board Meeting - March 11, 2020 at 7:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School**Plan of regionalization**

- A. Review of approved amendment**
- B. Discussion of next steps with Attorney Ritter**
- C. Possible resolution to approve the proposed amendment to the plan of regionalization**
- D. Possible resolution to call a district meeting for the purpose of holding a public hearing on the proposed amendment**
- E. Possible resolution to approve the question for a referendum vote to amend the plan of regionalization for the district and to authorize the preparation of explanatory text**

Mr. Moore stated that the board talked about the failure of the referendum at the last meeting and about options for moving forward. Dr. Serino and Mr. Moore have also talked to the First Selectmen of both towns. They had asked Attorney Matt Ritter to speak to the board and the public tonight about some of the options and about how they can move forward.

Attorney Ritter felt that the board has had a difficult few months because they had been used to doing something a certain way and then a law firm came out and said they didn't think you could do that any longer. Shipman & Goodwin became involved after the district received the opinion from the bond counsel at the time that the manner in which they could close a school required a plan amendment as opposed to a vote of the board. Shipman & Goodwin then worked with the board about how to amend the plan, have that language approved and then issue bonds for the school upgrades. The plan amendment obviously failed.

Attorney Ritter felt that the board was questioning whether the opinion from the bond counsel was accurate and if they actually need to go to referendum to close the school. The last time Attorney Ritter was at the board meeting, he was relying on that legal opinion. He has now taken the time to review the legal opinion and the plan amendment and he will not charge the district for his time for that work. He does understand where the law firm was coming from. Prior boards and counsel had relied on language in the plan on page 14 which stated that nothing in the plan was binding and that it was advisory. That was what was relied upon when schools had been closed in the past as many other regional school districts have done as well. What has happened is that the Supreme Court overruled a prior ruling in a similar situation.

The Supreme Court case talked about a plan that listed that there would be a certain number of schools in each town and then said that the district could not close those schools without amending the

plan. Attorney Ritter went back through District 13's plan and found that it recommended that there be an elementary school and a middle school in both towns. Schools had been closed decades ago and he does not believe any legal action can be taken on those, but they are now left with John Lyman School. In the spirit of Region 12's case and the new case law, Attorney Ritter does believe it is fair to say that it is safest to go with a plan amendment in order to close John Lyman. He feels that the district would be potentially subject to litigation, no matter what they do, but it would especially have merit if you were to change directions at this point.

The question that comes from that is what about the grade reconfiguration. Although the original plan stated that each town should have elementary and middle schools, it doesn't really talk about grades. Looking at pages 7 and 8 of the plan, Durham did not have a kindergarten at the time, but did have 1-3 at Brewster and 4-6 at Korn. Middlefield had a 1-2 elementary school, a kindergarten and a 3-5 grade school and then a 5-9 school. The plan did not make a recommendation on how the middle schools were reconfigured because there was no continuity. The creators of the plan acknowledged that that would have to be figured out by the district. Attorney Ritter felt that the board is on very strong ground to reconfigure the grades, under the rule that there will be two elementary schools in both towns unless the plan is amended. He does believe the board has the discretion to have the grades it would like in an elementary school.

The next question would be how a resolution to amend the plan would work. Attorney Ritter saw a lot of questions about whether one or two questions were necessary. That is not a legal question and is more about the board's comfort level. The question that was drafted and failed was simply asking if the board should have the discretion to close schools, with no particular school specified. There could have been a specific plan amendment asking to close John Lyman School. The problem with that is the limitation and if the board wanted to close a school in the future, there would need to be an additional plan amendment. Attorney Ritter did explain that the voters have the final say about whether John Lyman School will be closed or not.

There had been a question about a timeline. Attorney Ritter felt that if they are looking for two questions, they would have to move quickly to get it done by November. If it is just one question, it would be similar to the same process that they just completed, with a public hearing, a district meeting and a referendum. He felt it could realistically be done in two to three months, but drafting the plan amendment could take time.

Dr. Serino asked Attorney Ritter to address the issue of who can actually vote on an amendment to the plan as opposed to a vote to specifically close John Lyman School. Attorney Ritter explained that the one minor flaw in the prior legal opinion was that it recommended that the district do all of this in one shot, to amend the plan and authorize the issuance of bonds for the renovations. The problem with that is the statutes have different voting requirements. For bond issuance and the district's budget, eligible voters are the same voters who are eligible to vote in town meetings which includes property owners with assessed value of over \$1,000 in town. For the amendment to the plan, electors of the town are the only voters. Therefore, the district cannot combine the question to amend the plan and authorize the bonding at the same time. It could be done at the same referendum, but as two separate questions. If the plan were amended by the electors to include any closure of future schools be approved by a referendum vote, Attorney Ritter believes that it would still mean that electors and not property owners could vote on school closure. The question then becomes whether both towns need to approve it or not and he believes the answer is no. If the plan amendment was clear and authorized a referendum to close a school and specified that that is by majority vote of the two towns, that can be done if the amendment passes.

Mr. Moore mentioned that it was felt that people didn't read the explanatory information that went with the two questions on the past referendum. He asked if the whole plan amendment text could be voted on. Attorney Ritter stated that the board has flexibility as to how they draft the plan amendment, but the question has to be specific enough so that voters have a sense of what they are voting for. Because of the Region 12 case, Attorney Ritter suggested that whatever plan amendment is suggested, they will spend a lot of time making sure it's very specific so there is no more confusion or questions of interpretation. He felt that the voters of each town will be given a very specific thing to vote on. He agreed that nobody reads explanatory text, but did not know what to do about that. Because of state statute, explanatory text must be neutral and tend to be watered down.

Dr. Taylor noted that the prior language explicitly stated that the board would be authorized to determine the programs and facilities, including associated grade level configuration required to best serve the students of the district, including the alteration, expansion or closure of district school buildings. He wishes that they had included language only around school closure because it is now difficult to interpret the public's intent in voting it down. Dr. Taylor wondered if the board even has the authority to do any reconfiguration because of this failed referendum.

Attorney Ritter did not agree and felt that the key question was closure of schools, not reconfiguration. He reiterated that everything has the threat of litigation and the board may want to include it all again in the next question. He does not see anything in the 1967 plan that limits the board on the reconfiguration, subject to the two requirements of having an elementary school and a middle school in both towns.

Dr. Taylor added that there is explicit language in the plan that states that children attending elementary and middle schools remain in their present locations. He believes that the Supreme Court decision stated that the plan provided for hometown elementary schools because it was important to the townspeople and would have been less likely to approve a regional school plan that called for a consolidated elementary school in the future. Dr. Taylor does not believe it is clear cut that they are able to move elementary schools out of the towns. Attorney Ritter pointed out that there are differences in District 13's plan in that it says because of the difference in the grouping of grades in the two systems, the committee is making no recommendation concerning the grade structure of the middle school under regionalized administration and that such determination will be the function of the regional school boards. In Region 12, it specifically stated K-5. Attorney Ritter believes it would be hard for a judge to compare that to Region 12 because of that specific language. He also reviewed that there was no uniform plan across the two towns. Attorney Ritter reiterated that the plan does say there needs to be an elementary and a middle school in both towns, but any notion of what grades that would involve is critically absent.

Dr. Serino felt that the language about the children remaining at their elementary school was specific to that time in 1967. She felt that, at the time of the implementation of the plan, they did not intend for students to move out of their elementary school. She does not read that as students were never to change schools because they have clearly done that, and by parent choice, not board direction. Attorney Ritter pointed out that it does say children "attending" elementary and middle schools remain in their present locations. He does feel that an argument can be made to avoid a plan amendment, but his best advice is that the district should amend the plan to close a school, particularly because they have already gone down that path.

Dr. Friedrich stated that he agreed with Dr. Serino in that the plan applied to the children in the schools at the time. Apparently in violation of the agreement, the students moved out and went to other schools and have now all graduated. He believes that portion of the agreement is moot and no longer applies. Attorney Ritter referred to page 14 where it states "with the schools located in the towns of Durham and

Middlefield” and page 3 where it states “attending” and the fact that the word “attending” was not in the actual question.

Mrs. Booth stated that if they close John Lyman, there would only be one school in Middlefield and that would be an intermediate school, 3-5, which would not be an elementary and middle school. Mr. Moore then explained that 7-8 are all in Durham and have been for a long time. Attorney Ritter reiterated that prior boards have made decisions based on different case law and different interpretations. Mrs. Booth asked if they proceed with the plan and go to referendum to close John Lyman and it is approved, there will only be one school open in Middlefield and it would be 3-5. Attorney Ritter stated that that would arguably be an elementary school and a middle school as well. He suggested that they could put some clarifying language in as well. Elementary schools are defined in many different ways. Mr. Moore explained that he had done that in his report.

Attorney Ritter also mentioned that the town clerks, under the statute, normally post the explanatory text at the polling locations. He encouraged the board to make sure those are posted if they go to another referendum.

Mr. Roraback felt that past boards had a lot of flexibility in utilization and noted that he went to kindergarten at Chestnut Hill School, first grade at Center School and back to Chestnut Hill for second grade. He felt that there is a lot of history of kids moving from school to school and Middlefield kids have been going to school in Durham for a long time. Attorney Ritter felt that that would go to the weight of the evidence, if it ever went to court. The question for the board is if the school were to be closed without going to referendum, would that make the board more subject to litigation or not and it probably might.

Dr. Taylor felt that the bigger issue is about the wording of the document and what the intent of the amendment actually is. He felt that the clearest language would specify explicitly what the intended configuration is to set the stage for moving forward. Attorney Ritter explained that the board could include any language they'd like; it just has to be a yes or no answer, by state statute.

Mr. Yamartino asked Dr. Taylor if he wanted to specify the exact grade configurations that would be in each school or just to specify that the board would have the right to decide the grade configurations. Dr. Taylor would want to specify the actual configuration so that it would clarify previous steps that were taken and protect the district against future litigation. Mr. Yamartino felt that that would hamstring future boards and Attorney Ritter agreed and stated they would have to go back for a plan amendment. Dr. Taylor did not feel it would be unreasonable to do that.

Dr. Friedrich explained that everyone on the board spends an enormous amount of time understanding the issues that are involved, including grade configuration. Not everyone in town has the time to do that. Dr. Friedrich feels that that would hamstring the board in a way that is important to the board's function. He favors the idea that building openings and/or closings should be approved by voters. Dr. Taylor felt that these are fundamental shifts in the towns' structure and if the board decided to go with a different configuration, the towns should have the right to approve that. Dr. Friedrich reminded everyone that the board just voted to move a grade from one school to another and Dr. Taylor felt that that should have gone to referendum. Mrs. Geraci felt that that type of reconfiguration would require closure of schools or bonding which would, in fact, trigger a referendum anyway.

Mr. Yamartino reviewed that, with the past failed amendment, the board is bound by the original agreement, with two elementary schools in each town. That agreement also states that the board has the

right to manage the grade configurations. He did not feel that the board needs to put anything more specific in a future amendment to grant that authority because it already exists. Attorney Ritter agreed.

Mrs. Petrella stated that the public sees a 3-5 in Middlefield as a major change because it has been another way for so long. To the people of Middlefield, elementary is maybe a K-4 or K-5 or K-6, but the K-2 part is important. She would like to see the specific configurations included in the amendment because it says exactly where the district is headed, but also agrees that it would tie the board's hands in the future. Attorney Ritter explained that if the public allows the board to close John Lyman, they will not have to worry about having two schools.

Dr. Serino felt that the district can't do the grade reconfiguration without bonding and that means the plan has to be amended. Doing that grade reconfiguration includes the closure of John Lyman School. Dr. Taylor added that the board needs to find some way for Middlefield to have a voice in the process and give them the ability to vote on the decisions that have been made up to this point. He does not feel that that has been done.

Mrs. Petrella added that if the board decided to go with a referendum to specifically close John Lyman School, it would also mean that Memorial can be whatever grade configuration the board decides. Attorney Ritter clarified that if the plan is amended to close Lyman, that gets rid of the notion of requiring elementary schools in both towns. He felt that, at that point, the board would have a lot of flexibility about what grades go where as long as a school remains in each town. Mrs. Petrella is concerned that people need to understand that if Lyman is closed, Memorial can be whatever elementary grade configuration the board decides.

Mr. Moore mentioned that they are thinking about having another public session, talking about the history and showing the configurations over time. Mrs. Petrella reiterated that it is critical to explain what is going on in detail and to get a decent amount of feedback from the community to find out what they are thinking. Mr. Roraback noted that all of the grade flexibility in the past happened during an era of rapidly increasing enrollment and times are different now, with seriously declining enrollment.

Attorney Ritter summarized that the board needs to decide exactly what they would like the question to say for the plan amendment. The more that is in the question, the better. He also encouraged them to not lose sight of the fact that there is a budget associated with keeping a school open.

Mr. Yamartino believes that the board has the fiduciary responsibility to make sure that John Lyman School is functional, therefore \$4.5 million is necessary in the next budget. He feels that they should ask the voters to authorize either \$4.5 million or more to continue operation of John Lyman School with the associated operating costs or to fund \$2.6 million in order to outfit the other schools to accommodate the closing of Lyman.

Dr. Taylor doesn't understand why the board is afraid to just put it out there - the reconfiguration and the closure of the school. Everything else is complicated and slightly misleading. Attorney Ritter acknowledged that the district could go to referendum for \$4.5 million appropriation and bond authorization to renovate John Lyman School. The second question of the \$2.6 million to close the school would be an end-around of the process and would be closing the school by a majority vote and not both towns. Attorney Ritter stated that giving voters a choice may mean they pick both answers.

Mrs. Geraci asked if they could go to referendum to amend the plan to say that in order to close a school, it has to pass by referendum. A couple of months later, they could then go to referendum to close John

Lyman and to authorize the bond. Dr. Taylor feels that that would not be respectful of the independent town vote. Mr. Moore felt that part of regionalization is just that and the district, as a whole, ends up owning and managing the schools with both towns contributing with a proportional share. Mr. Moore felt that the plan amendment should include the configuration and the authority to close a school, followed by a referendum on the actual closure of the school. He does not feel that the board is ready to act and that they need to bring all of the information back out to the public, showing costs and benefits, current problems, impact of fixing the school or not fixing the school and then go back to referendum with a very specific amendment. He suggests the board spend a month preparing enough information so the public can get a sense of how the board got to this point to begin with.

Mrs. Petrella totally agreed and felt that a referendum now would just recreate what just happened. She did not feel that the \$4 million needs to be included in the budget because she doesn't believe that is needed instantly. She felt that they need to get as much information as possible out to the public and get input from the public as well to formulate the questions for the next referendum.

Dr. Serino asked if they felt that a survey was needed to get information from the community. Dr. Taylor did not feel a survey would be worthwhile unless they did a very rigorous survey with full representation of what would be at the voting booth. He also wasn't sure how informative the public will be about the specific language of the amendment and that is the board's job to create that. Dr. Taylor felt that informational sessions are wonderful, but the board needs to come to those sessions with the language that is intended to be on the referendum. He also mentioned that there could be two meetings, one to collect information to decide on the language and then a second to go over the proposed amendment. Dr. Serino asked what the board would want to know from the public regarding the language.

Mrs. Petrella felt that they need to know how people feel about closing a school and their thoughts on the grade configurations. Mr. Yamartino stated that fake news is alive and well in the district when he looked at social media. He saw that people felt that the board is not transparent, yet they have worked to include community members on committees. They allow people to attend meetings and speak and the board listens to all of the public comment. He also saw that the school district doesn't have a single school in the top 50, yet there are two elementary schools that are Schools of Distinction in the state. He also has heard the comments about the property values dropping if a school is closed. He has never once seen a study anywhere that says that. If the district were to make a statement like that, they would need to provide 10 studies proving why that was the case. Mr. Yamartino also stated that property values are still not back to where they were 10 years ago and that has nothing to do with a school being closed. He felt that the reason people don't want to close the school is because Middlefield will not have an elementary school, yet they have Independent Day School as well. He felt that people want K-5 in Middlefield. Mr. Yamartino does not believe another survey will provide any further information, but he does feel the board needs to do a better job of getting the information out. He noted that this is an emotional decision for many people and no amount of facts will change that. A lot of the discussions and public comment at the last meeting dealt with budget issues, closing the school, decreasing property values yet he never heard anything about the fact that they are trying to improve the educational opportunities of the students which is the primary driver for everything being discussed.

F. Discussion of minority rule with Attorney Ritter

Dr. Taylor had asked a question about whether the Durham town charter could be amended to provide for compliance with the minority representation statute. Attorney Ritter explained that the district does not have to comply with that because it would be very complicated with two towns. He felt that the Town of

Durham could provide for minority representation in their charter, but that would be an opinion for the town attorney.

Mr. Moore explained that they had also asked the town attorney about the new terms and Attorney Ritter commented that he had heard that, but it was up to the town attorney to decide. Mr. Moore will send a formal letter to the First Selectman asking for that decision.

The board took a five-minute recess at this point.

Mr. Moore summarized that the board will produce more information and Dr. Serino will conduct a survey. They will also hold a community conversation on March 30th and link the issues of education and buildings. Mr. Moore has prepared a time chart that shows which grades have been at which schools and Dr. Serino will send that out to everyone. He will also write to the Town of Durham to get the decision on terms. Dr. Serino also suggested that they get an FAQ out to people over the next few weeks.

2020-2021 Budget Discussion

A. Salaries/Staffing

Dr. Serino reviewed that the salary line has been funded at 95 percent this year and explained that if it had been funded at 100 percent, it would have been more than \$1 million increase. She explained that they always look at class size and teacher assignment and would have recommended an adjustment if they had felt that was best for students. It would not be her recommendation to make changes in the positions that were mentioned earlier this evening at John Lyman or Memorial.

Dr. Serino reviewed the .5 reduction in administration which is the change of the Director of Organizational Development position to an HR Specialist position, a 10.5 to a 10.0. In Certified Staff, there is a change from 188.4 current staff members to 188.9. The total three-year change is from 7.3 to 5.3 and certified grant-funded positions staying the same at 1.7.

Reductions have been driven by changes in enrollment and programmatic changes with regard to the Director of Organizational Development. Additions include a grade 2 teacher at Brewster, driven purely by enrollment, a Coordinator of Student Affairs at Strong, an enrichment teacher based at Strong, alternative education teacher based at Coginchaug, literacy specialist, BCBA, the IT position and the HR specialist.

Dr. Serino then reviewed a chart showing the allocation of staff members by school. There are no projected changes at John Lyman School next year. At Brewster, the addition of the second-grade teacher is based on enrollment. At Memorial, there are no projected changes for next year.

At Strong, one change is the Coordinator of Student Affairs which will be a teacher position, with administrator certification preferred but not required. The placeholder for this position is for \$93,000, with \$16,242 as a placeholder for insurance for two people. Dr. Serino reviewed the position and explained that it will be helpful for the transition of sixth graders to Strong School as well as to stay focused on the academic agenda. This will also help the principal to be more focused on instructional leadership and overall social, emotional and academic well-being. This person will have oversight of restorative practice development and implementation, overall student conduct, school and classroom climate as well as overall school climate. School assemblies and programming and before- and after-school programming will also be their responsibility. Dr. Serino explained that they are looking at having

some teachers start earlier in the day while other stay later. Dr. Serino explained that the primary impact of this position is support of students and teachers, support of the transition and help keep Strong School as a very responsive, developmentally-appropriate place for children.

The other position at Strong School that is being proposed is the enrichment teacher. Mrs. DiMaggio and a team of teachers and Mr. Ford have been looking at the process of identifying students who are gifted and talented. To this point, 53 students have qualified in the first two assessment areas. They would like to have this enrichment teacher work directly with the identified students, work with smaller groups of teachers and smaller groups of students who have not been identified. Looking further at enrichment, they also believe that this particular teacher can also work with teams of teachers to support them with the implementation of new approaches.

Moving to district-wide positions, they are proposing a district-wide literacy specialist to help the district meet regulatory guidelines for students with significant reading disabilities as well as dyslexia. This will also provide an in-house solution for the testing and reporting that is required. Dr. Serino explained that the district does have a specially-trained staff member who has been able to do in-house training in the areas of reading and special education. She also explained that, when working with specialized groups of students, it is critically important to partner with families and to form a cohesive approach in terms of how the district works with the students in school and how parents work with them at home. A secondary outcome will be shrinking the gap in ELA performance.

Dr. Serino went on to explain that the Board-Certified Behavioral Analyst is a position that requires very specific training and certification. Students with autism and other social-emotional, behavioral issues have been evaluated outside of the district, however there has been an increase in the intensity and the number of students needing this consultation. Having a BCBA in-house will provide a district-wide benefit and also decrease the cost in purchased services. Mrs. Neubig added that the amount that would have been budgeted this year for outside purchased services for a BCBA would have been \$157,000.

Dr. Serino explained that the year began with 10 students outplaced and there are currently eight. The average annual cost for a student placed outside the district is \$125,000, with transportation costs at about \$41,000 per year. They are looking to transition a few students back into the district, with a comprehensive program housed in the high school. Dr. Serino described several parts of the program. The district is committed to supporting all students.

Dr. Serino explained that the IT department will be doing a comprehensive presentation, but the Systems Technician position is being added to support teachers and students. The district needs to focus on cyber security and security in general and they would like to have the more knowledgeable folks in the department do that. The IT department will address what can be outsourced and what needs to be done in-house.

With regard to the HR Specialist, Dr. Serino explained that Mrs. Manning has focused the district's personnel processes, hiring, interview questions, exit interviews, personnel matters, FMLA and workers' comp as well as developing professional development. The professional development responsibility was shifted to Mrs. DiMaggio, the Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. Dr. Serino is now proposing less salary compensation than what is currently there because there are no benefits associated with it as it will be a half-time, non-union position.

Dr. Serino is also proposing that the director at MTA go from a half-time position to a full-time position. The services being offered to students there have been expanded.

Mrs. Booth asked about the increase of 67 percent in non-certified salaries at Brewster, Lyman and Memorial. Mrs. Neubig explained that, effective this year, there are three 10-month secretaries at Lyman, Brewster and Strong. They were .50 FTEs at Brewster and Lyman that are now 1.0 and Strong did not have a .5 office, so that was a 1.0 total. That produces a 2.0 FTE in the secretarial non-certified line. Mrs. Booth questioned the admin position at Lyman going from \$57,000 this year to \$88,000 next year, which is a 55 percent increase. Mrs. Neubig will look into that. Dr. Serino explained that these positions were both administrative and teaching assistants and have now been moved to full-time in the office.

Mr. Moore added that the Student Achievement Committee supports the enrichment position and Mrs. Petrella stated that the committee made a motion to that effect.

Mrs. Geraci asked if Dr. Serino felt that a .5 HR position is enough for the number of employees in the district. She also asked if the position was exempt or non-exempt. Dr. Serino stated that it would be great to have a full-time position, but it really depends. The Director of Organizational Development role has included communication, the focus on equity and oversight of well-being and will need to be overseen in a different way.

Mrs. Geraci is in full support of the BCBA and alternative ed teacher and felt it is important to keep children with their peers. She feels that the district has always been known to have a fantastic special ed program and this will take that to the next step. Mrs. Geraci noted that the BCBA and the alternative ed teacher have similar salaries and thought that the BCBA salary was a little low. Mrs. Keane explained that she researched average salaries and that the position was a 12-month position.

Mrs. Neubig explained that the transition for the 10-month secretary from TA happened in the 2019-2020 year, however it had not been included in that budget.

Dr. Taylor asked if additional personnel will be needed with students coming back into the district and how that will impact the environment. Ms. Keane explained that the special ed teacher and the BCBA as well as existing staff will assist in that. Dr. Taylor asked if that will pull resources away from existing areas and Ms. Keane explained that they are getting the base services needed, but no students will be in the program without the support that is needed. Dr. Serino explained that current staff have caseloads and an increase in the need for those services can happen at any point. They do feel that there is room within those caseloads to support this program. The students that will be brought in will be students that the district can appropriately serve.

Mrs. Geraci felt that that was exactly why the BCBA is so critical. The BCBA develops the behavioral intervention plan and will be able to train current staff. Dr. Serino added that this would add another layer of support for behavioral issues. They have also talked about this helping students at Strong as well. Mr. Falcone felt that resources will not be spread too thin as students will be in various locations as well.

B. Programming

The work in social-emotional learning and support will continue at the elementary and middle school level with parent support and workshops. Restorative practices will continue at the middle school as will the continued collaboration with CCSU. Recent survey data from the middle school and high school students revealed a lower percentage of students identifying that they have a trusted adult in school and that will be an important focus.

Dr. Serino noted that they are calling this pre-K to MTA and will include the expansion of HOT practices, development of school-based design teams and project-based learning.

A big area in programming is the expansion in STEAM. Dr. Serino showed slides that review what currently happens in the STEAM program as well as what they dream to have happen. She will share the slides with the board members. Mr. Yamartino commented that this topic is just one way that the administration and staff has been moving the district forward. When that is combined with project-based learning, the HOT approach and Portrait of the Citizen, that will be the fundamental foundation of the district.

Dr. Serino asked if the board would wait a couple of weeks before going into a comprehensive discussion about a before- and after-care program, but showed some projections based on \$8 per hour fee for parents. A survey was done and results came in from 145 people. Of that, 75 were from Brewster, 47 from Lyman and 28 from Memorial that said they would be interested in before- and after-care. There were lots of questions from parents but most everyone was grateful for the opportunity. She reviewed the number of students who would be interested. The district will also continue discussion with Dolphin Days. If the district were to decide to run this program, there would be no budget impact though there would be a potential for revenue.

C. Professional Learning and Resources

Dr. Serino also reviewed some of the professional development that is planned for next year. They are projecting spending \$89,000. These areas include math, library media, reading and literacy, unified arts, equity training and support and district design model which includes project-based learning, the Portrait of the Citizen, enrichment and TAG programming and continuation of the HOT school resident artist. There will be PD on social-emotional learning and well-being, instructional improvement and curriculum work, data/student information systems and assessment, advanced placement and student-directed learning and continued focus on instructional technology and STEAM. Special education professional development will continue and will also be provided for MTA.

D. Benefits

Mrs. Neubig reviewed the various elements of benefits and explained that there is a significant increase this year of \$405,000 (7.27 percent) and the reason is because of the significant decrease last year with the change of insurance carriers. With that negotiation, there was a rate cap of 9.5 percent for this year which would have been much higher this year. Because there has been a surplus in benefits in the past, this budget is for an increase of 7.5 percent. Workers' compensation insurance increased by \$9,000 this year. The pension contribution has also increased. These increases have been offset by decreases in health insurance conversions, unemployment compensation and the proposed TRB share which was not budgeted this year.

E. Purchased Services

Mrs. Neubig reviewed all of the areas that are covered under professional services. She explained that there is a projected decrease of \$75,000, including outside evaluations as a result of the BCBA being hired. She did explain that the salary for the BCBA would not be in this line item and would be shown in salaries. An updated enrollment study was done this year, so none is being budgeted for next year. There had also been \$165,000 budgeted for culvert engineering fees which are not needed in the next budget as

any work will be covered under the bonding going forward. The increases in this area include the CIAC requiring a site supervisor at all home games, the moves for third and sixth grade, cyber security, increased speech services, an increase in OT and PT wages, an increase in in-service for wellness and equity training and several contracted commitments, including weight room inspections, asbestos consultation and turf maintenance. Mrs. Neubig added that security services are also included in purchased services.

Mrs. Neubig explained that the district will see an estimated savings of \$100,000 by bringing in a BCBA as an employee. That will be offset by salary in a different area, so it is not a total savings of \$100,000. She added that the entire presentation will be on the website tomorrow. Mr. Moore thanked everybody for their efforts on the budget.

Committee Reports

A. Policy Committee Meeting - January 29, 2020

1. Second read or possible vote on the following policies:
 - a. Confidentiality and Access to Education Records
 - b. Section 504/ADA (Personnel)
 - c. Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (Students)

Mr. Hicks reviewed the policies that were discussed at the last meeting and explained that the Policy Committee has already approved them.

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to approve the three policies listed above as presented by the Policy Committee.

In favor of approving the above-mentioned three policies, as presented by the Policy Committee: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Well-Being Committee Meeting - February 20, 2020

Mrs. Caramanello reported that most of their meeting was focused on the newest updates from the state about lockdowns and drills. Officer Hesseltine was in attendance at the meeting as well. The district focuses on making sure less anxiety is involved with these drills. They also talked about the school climate survey and found the areas of focus to be homework and having a trusted adult at home and at school. Dr. Serino had shared that the current advisory model is in place for that purpose as well. They postponed updates from the Playground Committee and the eighth-grade survey.

Dr. Taylor noted that he had not seen anything specific in the board's documents about school safety/lockdown about what actually constitutes a lockdown. He wondered if that should be a board-level policy decision. Dr. Serino stated that that sits in the safety and security manuals which now have all new protocols from the state. The district will rewrite those manuals this summer. She will share what has been received from the state. Dr. Serino reviewed how important it is that the kids know it is just a drill, but there were unannounced drills as well. They did tell the teachers that an unannounced drill will happen during the week, to pay special attention to students who seemed frightened or anxious and to immediately send a Parent Square notification out to all parents. The state police have stressed the importance of practice.

C. Utilization Committee Meeting - February 20, 2020

Dr. Taylor reported that the Utilization Committee talked about the regional plan amendment and had some discussion about Korn School. They hope to hear a decision from the Town of Durham by the end of March regarding Korn. They also had discussion about playground equipment at Memorial and Lyman.

D. Student Achievement Committee Meeting - February 25, 2020

Mrs. Petrella reported that the committee was presented with the 6-8 math curriculum and she feels it is just phenomenal. There are 29 units, each of which has an accompanying packet. There is also a grade 7 accelerated unit and there will be a grade 8 accelerated unit as well which is currently being developed with the high school. The committee voted to recommend to the board that they approve the grade 6-8 math curriculum, as presented.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the 6-8 math curriculum that was presented to the Student Achievement Committee on February 25, 2020.

In favor of approving the 6-8 math curriculum that was presented to the Student Achievement Committee on February 25, 2020: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried, with Dr. Taylor abstaining.

Mrs. Petrella went on to report that the committee also discussed accountability and documents were included in the board's packets. There are 12 indicators that the state looks at to score the district. It includes academic achievement and growth, but also participation rates, absenteeism, post-secondary and career readiness coursework and exams, graduation rates, physical fitness and arts. She reviewed that the district had scored 79.3 percent in 2016-2017, 81.5 percent in 2017-2018 and 83.6 percent in 2018-2019. They also saw a comparison of the DRG. In 2016-2017, the district was 9 out of 30 in the DRG and went up to 6 out of 30 in 2018-2019. John Lyman School remains a School of Distinction, Strong School went from category 3 to category 2 and Memorial continues at category 2. The district has high participation rates, at 99.3 percent participation.

Mrs. Petrella explained that the areas of improvement are also included in the packets. She also noted that Brewster dropped from the highest performing category to a category 3, mostly due to the principal transition as well third grade having three teachers out on maternity leave. The high school dropped from category 2 to 3, with this being the first year that science standards were measured. She also noted that the participation rate at the high school was only 93.3 which also caused them to lose points as well.

The committee also talked about the HOT expansion and Dr. Serino explained that the HOT school approach is being expanded to all the elementary and middle schools. She also explained how the Portrait of a Citizen and the HOT approach come together. The move to project-based learning also fits into the Portrait of a Citizen. Dr. Serino also noted that grants are being made available to assist with organizing the HOT approach throughout the district.

E. Finance Committee Meeting - February 25, 2020

Mr. Moore reported that the Finance Committee met last night and basically went over the budget on a high level and they had a number of questions. They also talked about the regionalization plan and how to move forward. The Finance Committee was concerned with the implementation and the thought of keeping another school open. They also talked about Korn and noted that the town has hired a code consultant to see if any code variances could be obtained.

Communications

Mr. Moore received communication from Kim Davis and Jenna Catacone who were in support of before- and after-school care. Laura Herbeck was planning to move into Middlefield and wanted to know about school structure. He also received a letter from Russ Smith, the senior pastor at Meriden Hills Baptist Church and principal of the Midstate Christian Academy, who was interested in discussing the possibility of talking about the availability of John Lyman School. Mr. Moore also received a letter from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges who is setting up a meeting with Mr. Falcone to go over accreditation and they had some minor issues with having a part-time rather than a full-time library media center.

Mrs. Booth also mentioned the play that will be held on Friday through Sunday. She felt it was a good compilation of both programs coming together, with some very talented kids.

Dr. Geraci wanted to thank the Brewster community who supported her daughter while she was in a wheelchair for a number of weeks.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Serino will email her report to everyone, but explained that she will be attending a meeting at the Southington Health District on March 3rd about the coronavirus. Mr. Yamartino explained that the health district has a lot of different outreach programs.

Mr. Moore added that he received a letter from the teacher who came with the students from China. They indicated that they had 200 cases of the virus in Ningbo and their school has been shut down since January. Everything is being done online, but they hope to have the school open back up at the end of March. Dr. Serino added that she and Mr. Falcone are looking at ways to enhance their virtual connection with Ningbo.

Director of Finance's Report

Mrs. Neubig reported that the district is 62 percent received for revenue and 56 percent expended. Snow removal is running under budget and there could be a surplus there. She is reconciling a lot of the accounts to report soon about any possible surplus. There appears to be a little bit of a surplus in salaries and a little over-expended in outplaced tuition. MTA revenue is at 63 percent and expenditures are at 48 percent. There should be a surplus in MTA again this year.

New Business**A. Vote to approve CRHS Model UN field trip request**

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the CRHS Model UN field trip request to Cornell University on April 23-26, 2020, with the understanding that this trip may be withdrawn at any time due to actions of Homeland Security or other government or law enforcement agency or health agency, such as, but not limited to, Center for Disease Control and that parents, guardians and students be apprised of this possible action.

In favor of approving the CRHS Model UN field trip request to Cornell University on April 23-26, 2020, with the understanding that this trip may be withdrawn at any time due to actions of Homeland Security or other government or law enforcement agency or health agency, such as, but not limited to, Center for Disease Control and that parents, guardians and students be apprised of this possible action: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Vote to approve CRHS DECA field trip request

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the CRHS DECA field trip request to Nashville, Tennessee on April 28-May 3, 2020, with the understanding that this trip may be withdrawn at any time due to actions of Homeland Security or other government or law enforcement agency or health agency, such as, but not limited to, Center for Disease Control and that parents, guardians and students be apprised of this possible action.

In favor of approving the CRHS DECA field trip request to Nashville, Tennessee on April 28-May 3, 2020, with the understanding that this trip may be withdrawn at any time due to actions of Homeland Security or other government or law enforcement agency or health agency, such as, but not limited to, Center for Disease Control and that parents, guardians and students be apprised of this possible action: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Vote to appoint community member to the Building Committee

Mr. Moore reported that, through Mrs. Booth's support, another person has come forward to work on the Building Committee. Kelly Aingworth has spent 18 years as a healthcare administrator with a focus on large-scale project management, including work at Yale Medicine. She is the point person for Yale's architects, planners, construction managers and senior leadership. She recently worked on the Yale Child Study Center, a 77,000 sq. ft. space designed to support children and families in a behavioral health environment. Mr. Moore felt that Mrs. Aingworth is a very capable person with lots of skills that will add to the Building Committee. She is a Durham resident and married with three children, two of which are at Lyman and an upcoming kindergartner.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Geraci, to approve the appointment of Kelly Aingworth to the Building committee.

In favor of approving the appointment of Kelly Aingworth to the Building Committee: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

Donia Viola stated that transparency does need to be addressed inasmuch as meetings are not open or conveyed about decisions that impact the Durham and Middlefield taxpayers. She reminded the board that everyone is part of the whole picture. Mrs. Viola also mentioned that the turf that had been installed years back was hazardous and should have never been installed. Our field, along with three other schools, was cited in the report. She also commented that the counselors at Strong School and the high school are in human resources for students, not personnel, and she thinks that personnel be removed from the counselor positions and the BCBA added. A neighbor told her that her daughter who is employed by the district felt that she would not have to worry about losing her job should Lyman close and would be moved to another location. Mrs. Viola also felt that safety of the children should be a priority and mentioned the discussions of vaccinations that are taking place in the state. She would like to think that the district would support vaccinations.

Roger Passavant, from Durham, had spoken to the board two weeks ago with regard to a package of information that he had sent to the board members. He wondered why that was not brought up under the Communications section this evening. If he had not followed the correct process, he would like to know. Otherwise, he would also like to know why his communication was not read into the minutes this evening. He is also very disappointed that no one from the board has reached out to him as he had made it very clear that he would like to discuss the issue further.

Mr. Moore stated that it was a student issue and he will get back to Mr. Passavant personally, but not during the meeting. Mr. Hicks stated that he will also reach out to Mr. Passavant as he had chaired that meeting.

Carl Stoup, from Durham, spoke about regionalization which he believes should mean regional, not town by town. He read from the original agreement as to why the regional district was formed to begin with. He also stated that the agreement recommended elementary schools and middle schools should remain in their present locations, but that that was just a recommendation. Under the referendum section, it was emphasized that the Board of Education would determine the programs and facilities of the district and that the board would not be legally bound by the recommendations of the study committee. Mr. Stoup is at a loss as to why the attorney is saying that there needs to be a school in Middlefield.

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, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz
Alwaz First