

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in special session on Wednesday, May 6, 2020 at 7:00 PM remotely.

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

Board members absent: Mr. Hicks.

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

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the agenda, as presented.

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

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education special session meeting April 22, 2020

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Geraci, to approve the minutes from the April 22, 2020 meeting.

In favor of approving the minutes of the April 22, 2020 meeting, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting - Public Hearing on the 2020-2021 Education Budget - May 13, 2020 at 6:00 PM

Ken Pietrasko explained that the public hearing will be live streamed on YouTube and the public can call in to ask a question. Mr. Pietrasko suggested that he will acknowledge the phone number and allow them to ask their question. Mr. Yamartino asked that the public state their name and address once they are off mute. Mr. Moore explained that instructions will be sent out prior to the public hearing and also noted that they will try to answer the questions that were received via the questionnaire. Some respondents have asked for individual responses and Mr. Moore will do that before the public hearing.

Mr. Moore added that the meeting on May 27th will be for the vote on the budget. Dr. Serino felt that some board members may want to address specific questions at the public hearing, i.e. the money being spent on playground equipment at John Lyman School, the field house, per pupil expenditures, etc. Mr. Moore hoped that Mr. Yamartino and Mrs. Booth could answer questions related to the playgrounds. They will review other questions and hopefully different board members can answer them. Mrs. Geraci asked if the questions/comments can be put on a slide with answers and Mr. Moore stated that they will work on that.

School Closure Update

Dr. Serino reported that they had a call with the health director on Tuesday morning and he encouraged everyone to exercise extreme caution and follow all safety and social distancing guidelines. She asked about when they could expect information on re-opening the schools and he was pretty clear that the state's priorities are nail salons and restaurants. Dr. Serino also had a conference call with the governor this afternoon and they were told that guidelines will be available on Friday for small offices.

Dr. Serino has spoken with many superintendents and there are many different plans for graduation. A call will be set up to provide specific guidelines for an in-person graduation of any type. The Commissioner of Education had planned to announce closure of schools for the rest of the year at 3:00 yesterday and he was surprised that the governor shared that information earlier in the day. Commissioner Cardona encouraged everyone today to finish the year strong and stay with the scheduled last day of school. Dr. Serino believes that there may be a potential for some district-level decision-making around that in the next week or so.

Dr. Serino also noted that the state has changed the formula by which the per pupil expenditure will be determined so that excess costs is a little more predictable from year to year.

On the call with the commissioner at 3:00, they had been told that they would get information about summer school by May 15th but the Governor said that summer school could probably be started in late July. Summer camps can potentially open at the end of next month.

District 13's planning and response team met on Tuesday and covered the beginning phases of re-opening planning and school calendar considerations. Dr. Serino would like to make sure the teachers have time to do assessments of students' skills. She added that June 16th is on the calendar for graduation, with an alternate date of July 31st. Prom is still on the calendar for June 11th. Dr. Serino and Mrs. Gaudreau will meet tomorrow to begin to plan room moves and the summer cleaning schedule will get underway. They are talking about protocols for returning to work and continue to focus on well-being, including continuing the Wellness initiatives with ConnectiCare. Mrs. Branciforte talked about considerations for returning to the building, including taking temperatures and what types of PPE might be needed.

All students are eligible for free lunches and they have seen a doubling in the meal distribution over the last week. This week is teacher and staff appreciation week and Mr. Moore noted the board's appreciation for all of their hard work.

The priority areas shared by the State Department of Education for the next 12 months include equitable access to technology, access to high-quality curriculum, educational recovery and the re-opening of schools and social and emotional well-being for all students. The district has their own security and safety plan based on a guideline from the state. The district's general goals are focused on well-being and safety, including mental health, operations, teaching and learning.

Dr. Serino stated that her husband, Dave, is the Director of Environmental Health and Safety at Western Connecticut State University where they have begun the process of preparing a plan for campus re-entry and she has looked at some of their resource documents and plans. Other considerations include what the schedule might look like upon return to school, staffing needs including a coordinator of recovery and student needs and resources. Dr. Serino has been in touch with the director of Dolphin Days to see if they

have any capabilities for summer camp as well as getting the childcare started. They plan to meet once a week, beginning next week.

Mrs. Caramanello asked if there are any plans for graduation if it can't be held in person. Dr. Serino reported that Mr. Petronio is in charge of organizing a virtual graduation.

Dr. Serino reviewed that many board members attended the Student Achievement meeting where Mrs. DiMaggio gave her update as well as the survey results. She just got the results from the student survey and the administrative team will review them on Friday. Dr. Serino had asked parents what's working well and what challenges they are facing. The highest rated response from parents was the connection with family and loved ones is most important. Dr. Serino has had some conversations about live learning and parents say that their kids really want to see their teachers with a real-time/live connection. Elementary teachers are finishing up their training with Google Hangout this week and have been piloting that. They hope to have live classroom meetings two times a week. In grades five and six, they have a homework hangout for an hour each day. There will also be one-on-one live instructions for students with special needs.

Mrs. DiMaggio also surveyed other districts and gathered information from nine schools and District 13 is right within the framework and design of the other schools in terms of the format and frequency of synchronous and asynchronous learning. Dr. Serino assured everyone that the design that has been implemented was very deliberately planned with the primary concern of equity and access including all students' availability for live learning. Everyone is aware that this is a dynamic plan that will likely change over time.

Mr. Moore added that, for graduation, Mr. Petronio is working with students as well and their committee meets regularly. He also hoped to have a Well-Being Committee meeting soon. Dr. Serino added that she feels very good about the district's support of teachers and students.

Dr. Serino is trying to make sure that everyone continues to work together and support one another as a team while she is aware that parents are feeling the stress of distance learning. All of the feedback is helpful and they are striving to do the very best they can for all students.

New Business

A. Vote to accept Nurses' Contract

Mr. Moore reported that negotiations were finished in early March and this has not been voted on yet. Mrs. Neubig reviewed that the negotiations were very cordial and the union has ratified it. The total cost over three years is \$29,200, which is a 2 percent gross wage increase and a step increase of 1.5 percent, totaling a 3.5 percent increase. They also added two steps at the end of the pay scale. The health insurance premium shared was increased in year three by .5 percent and they agreed to increase the Nurse Coordinator stipend to 8 percent of the RN-1 salary. The HSA and health insurance deductible remained the same. There were also some minor language changes in the contract. There are currently five nurses in the district.

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the Nurses' Contract.

In favor of approving the Nurses' Contract: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Vote on Healthy Food Certification

Mrs. Neubig reviewed that this is a renewal of the yearly application to participate in the National School Lunch Program.

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the Healthy Food Certification for 2020-2021 for food options. This motion moves the following healthy food options pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes, section 10-221f, the Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in schools under its jurisdiction and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards for the period of July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately and reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias and any fund-raising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or by non-school organizations and groups.

In favor of approving the Healthy Food Certification for 2020-2021 for food options: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the Healthy Food Certification for 2020-2021 for beverage options. This motion allows the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutritional Standards and beverages not listed in section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes, provided that the following conditions are met: (1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; (2) the sale is at the location of the event and (3) the food and beverage items are not sold in a vending machine; (4) the event is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly-scheduled practice, meeting or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays and interscholastic debates are exempt, but soccer practices, play rehearsals and debate team meetings are not. The regular school day is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the school day. Location means where the event is being held.

In favor of approving the Healthy Food Certification for 2020-2021 for beverage options: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Discussion of Term Extensions for Durham BOE Members

Mr. Moore spoke with Laura Francis and Karen Cheyney, the Registrar of Voters, and the plan is to have a virtual town meeting on June 7th where they will accept nominations for the three expiring terms (Mr. Moore, Mr. Hicks and Mrs. Geraci) for the term of July 1, 2020 to Election Day in November, 2021. They will adjourn the meeting and then arrange some kind of voting for the following day. They have discussed having a drive-through at Korn School or at the Cow Palace on the fairgrounds.

Dr. Serino reported that Mrs. Francis had asked the governor if there would be further guidance on municipal Board of Education elections and she was told that more guidance was coming. They did have a drive-through vote in Vernon, but it really wasn't something that the state was saying was okay. Dr. Serino was not sure that type of set-up would be approved by the Board of Health.

Dr. Taylor did not understand the position that the town is taking where they are ignoring the written component of their town charter and moving forward with something different. Dr. Taylor felt that someone could bring a suit against this as not being a valid process. He would hope this could be resolved before moving forward in any other way. Mr. Moore reviewed that the town's attorney outlined three different options because it had been so many years since that was passed. Dr. Taylor just didn't see how they could circumnavigate the Town Charter.

Committee Reports

A. Student Achievement Committee Meeting - April 27, 2020

Mrs. Petrella reported that Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed distance learning with the committee. A link will be provided with the minutes so that the slides are available. In phase I, the transition was made from classroom teaching to distance learning. The focus was on developing and organizing along with consistent learning teacher expectations as well as parent/student expectations. They developed a consistent teaching/learning template as well as comprehensive development of professional learning to support students. Schedules were developed for teachers and administrators. In grades K-6, all students got the exact same materials at each level. A lot of work was developed by the IT department.

They also put together surveys for parents, teachers and staff as well as students. Mrs. Petrella highlighted that the highest participation rate on the parent survey was at the high school (24.5 percent), Lyman was next at 21.7 percent, Brewster had 19 percent, Memorial had 18.3 and Strong had 15.8. As for the quality of instruction, 41.1 percent rated it excellent and 43 percent rated it good, with 16 in the fair range. Mrs. DiMaggio highlighted that the teachers' responses were overwhelmingly positive.

Moving to phase II, they will begin to identify priorities including live connections with students and teacher instructional videos. They will gradually develop Google Hangouts for K-12 and pilot both areas in the high school first. Professional development will be provided for the staff as well. They are looking at instituting a week-at-a-glance documents for parents.

Mrs. DiMaggio also reviewed grading and explained that the State Board of Education has recommended that schools adopt a pass-fail protocol and Mrs. Petrella reviewed the options which would include pass with distinction, pass, fail and incomplete. Mrs. Petrella commented on the extraordinary amount of work on behalf of all involved.

Dr. Friedrich noted that when he came on the board seven years ago, they had a new acting superintendent who arrived to discover that there was no curriculum. Teams of teachers wrote through the summer and the next year and managed to keep two months ahead of the delivery of the curriculum. Then came the changes in teacher evaluations and the state's testing system. While Dr. Friedrich thought those were big crises, what is happening now is even bigger. Overnight, an entire curriculum has been established, a whole new way of teaching has been established and the IT department managed to deliver equipment to everyone as well as dealing with software issues. Dr. Friedrich felt that the effort starting with Dr. Serino and going through the entire staff could not be honored enough.

Dr. Serino added that she and Mr. Pietrasko have begun conversations about other available platforms and what the benefits would be to making a change as well as any new devices that may help with all this. Dr. Serino summarized that teaching will never be the same and instruction will be changed forever and for the better.

Communications

Mr. Moore received communication from Nick Faiella asking a number of questions about the budget and Michelle DiMauro wrote about the field house and other things. Those were included in the minutes from the last meeting.

Mr. Moore received new communication from Maya Lis who is concerned about the stress on the families and is interested in ending the school year sooner. He received a similar question from Heidi Pizzo who asked to end school earlier this year. Kim Rizzo is concerned about getting kids in Durham on the same internet system. He will include all of those communications with these minutes.

Mr. Moore also received thank-yous from all of the administrators for the gifts from the board that Mrs. Geraci organized. There are a number of student comments, including an update on Tim Fisher's condition. Mr. Fisher is moving into a rehabilitation center and is really starting to function more fully than he had been. Pierce Stephan and other band members put together a music video for him and Dr. Serino played part of that video. Dr. Friedrich encouraged everyone to go to the POPS Facebook page to see the video in full and Dr. Serino will send the link out to everyone.

Amy Schaefer's tennis team also sent out a nice thank-you to all the nurses and other workers.

Mr. Moore has also been involved in weekly meetings with the chairmen of the boards of education and their issues are basically the same as District 13's. There is a lot of focus on graduation and a number of issues related to recognition of the teachers for all of their hard work as well as budget adoption issues. They are focusing now on how to get back to school.

Mrs. Geraci wished all of the district's teachers a happy teacher appreciation week. Mr. Moore added that it is nurse appreciation day today as well.

Adjournment

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

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

Meeting was adjourned at 8:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First

Public Comment Received Via Email

From: Maya Perry Liss <>
Date: May 5, 2020 at 11:13:19 AM EDT
To: Robert Moore <rmoore@rsd13.org>
Subject: Last Day of School?

Hi Bob,

I hope all is well with you and your family.

I'm wondering if RSD13 will keep June 16 as the last day of school? I'm hoping it would be possible to end the school year early. Both of my girls are participating in distance learning. It's fine for what it is, but it is not a substitute for live classroom instruction and participation. Looking ahead to another six weeks of distance learning, our family morale is starting to dip. I'm sure that the case for many other families.

In no way do I want to criticize all of the effort the teachers have put in to putting the distance learning program together. They are working with an incredibly difficult set of circumstances. Giving teachers some extra time in June to plan ahead for next year might be beneficial for everyone.

Please feel free to share this at the next BOE meeting. Thank you for your consideration.

Maya Liss

From: "Faiella, Nicholas T" <>
Date: April 27, 2020 at 9:05:21 AM EDT
To: Kim Neubig <kneubig@rsd13.org>
Cc: Robert Moore <rmoore@rsd13.org>, Kathryn Veronesi <kveronesi@rsd13.org>
Subject: RE: Annual Budget Summary Expenses

Thank you for the clarification

From: Kim Neubig [mailto:kneubig@rsd13.org]
Sent: Monday, April 27, 2020 9:00 AM
To: Faiella, Nicholas T <>
Cc: Robert Moore <rmoore@rsd13.org>; Kathryn Veronesi <kveronesi@rsd13.org>
Subject: Re: Annual Budget Summary Expenses

Hi Nick,

The slide you are referring to are historical **budget** numbers. You asked for **actuals**, which is what the figures I sent represent.

Thanks,

Kim

Kimberly Neubig
Director of Finance
Regional School District 13

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On Mon, Apr 27, 2020 at 8:57 AM Faiella, Nicholas T <> wrote:

I just found this slide in the presentation, the historical numbers seem to be off slightly, which do you think is more accurate?

From: Kim Neubig [mailto:kneubig@rsd13.org]
Sent: Monday, April 27, 2020 8:44 AM
To: Faiella, Nicholas T <>
Cc: Robert Moore <rmoore@rsd13.org>; Kathryn Veronesi <kveronesi@rsd13.org>
Subject: Re: Annual Budget Summary Expenses

Good Morning Nick,

Bob has asked me to send this information to you. my responses are in red.

SY21=\$37.4MM proposed **Confirmed**

- SY20=\$36.8MM budget **Confirmed**
- SY19=\$35.4MM actual **Confirmed**
- SY18=\$35.6MM actual **Confirmed**
- SY17=? \$36.1MM **actual Confirmed**
- SY16=? \$36.9MM **actual Confirmed**
- SY15=? \$36MM **actual Confirmed**

Kim

From: Heide Pizzo <>
Date: May 6, 2020 at 10:36:12 AM EDT
To: rmoore@rsd13.org
Subject: Hello

Hello Mr. Moore,

I wanted to thank to the board for all of it hard work during this time. I know it is very interesting time as a parent. I wanted to reach out regarding how the end of the year is going to look now that we are officially ending the school year online. As a parent of 4 children in this district I would be open to school ending earlier then June 16. I realize that everyone is struggling at this time. I think ending school earlier would allow our teachers and staff for some more online training. The teachers are doing an amazing job and the special education department has been phenomenal. We also need to think of ways to make this easier for the parents and perhaps online training for them as well . I did take the survey. I hope that information will help. Thank you.

Best,
Heide Pizzo

From: Kevin Rizzo <>
Date: May 6, 2020 at 10:45:26 AM EDT
To: rmoore@rsd13.org
Subject: Board Meeting

Hello!

I am a concerned citizen of Durham with a suggestion to the board.

With the imminent closure of the next school year, the notion of online learning is ever present. However, though the quality of education is unknown, the quality of internet accessibility must be known.

A students at-home internet quality is directly proportionate to the quality of education. CRHS in particular must be sending properly educated graduates into the world. Since most of the services in RSD13 have ceased, there should be plenty of resources not being used. My proposal is simple but ensures a higher quality of education.

An arrangement between RSD13, the town of Durham and Internet Service Providers (ISP) should be struck to provide students with access to the internet for little to no cost for a fixed period of time. These times are unprecedented, so to should the action. Parents and students are looking to institutions of education to find a way to ease the difficulties of remote education.

For some, it is difficult at best. Allow your students to learn and keep yourselves in business.

Thank you.

From: Chad Dalles <>
Date: May 8, 2020 at 12:04:06 PM EDT
To: Robert Moore <rmoore@rsd13.org>
Subject: Re: Education Budget

Must be nice to get a raise when the rest of the world is suffering. If a teacher can't figure out how to do a zoom meeting with 10 minutes, maybe he/she should not be teaching. I wonder why they can't use a phone to call each student once per week. Maybe they need training or more money for that. Someone should hold teachers accountable but I guess it doesn't matter since the unions will give pay increases regardless of performance or aptitude.

I already reached out to the schools more than 8 times, but they don't answer phones, don't return calls and use a generic template email reply.

Why don't you call the governor and the union rep and express concern?

Chad Dalles
CFO
Believe Group
Work: (303) 200-1293
Fax: (877) FAX-BELIEVE
Cell: (720) 375-4214
ChadDalles@BelieveGroup.com

On May 8, 2020, at 11:55 AM, Robert Moore <rmoore@rsd13.org> wrote:

Mr Dalles

Thank you for your email and your concerns.

The increase in the salary line in the budget reflects union contract requirements and the net increase of two positions. The benefit line increase is due to an increase in health insurance. These costs are for the next school year where it is expected that our costs will increase due to the complexity of opening the schools under the conditions of dealing with the COVID-19 virus. The administration and board are proposing a budget that has no increase in the net budget to the towns.

The Board of Education net budget is less than the 2015/16 budget and shows a minus 0.2% change over the last five years. The growth in per student cost reflects the declining enrollment against the costs despite continuing to have negative growth in the net budget.

With regard to your concern with the current distance learning, our teachers had to immediately change the manner of teaching, develop new curriculum, evaluate the best technology while keeping student privacy, be trained on dealing with students in their home environment, and determine how to evaluate student performance. The teachers are putting in longer days to accomplish this.

With regard to cutting salaries, the Governor's executive order requires school districts to maintain teachers at their current employment along with other school employees.

Please reach out directly to your children's teachers or principals, I am sure they will want to assist them in the best way they are able.

I am sorry you feel as you do but the entire District staff are doing their best to serve our students and prepare the facilities for a return to some new educational norm.

Sincerely

Bob Moore

Sent from my iPhone

On May 7, 2020, at 4:48 PM, Chad Dalles <> wrote:

Chairman Moore,

I received the education budget notice in mail. I have 2 boys in the district. I think it is unconscionable to give raises when most of the country is getting a pay cut, reduced hours or laid off. As far as benefits, most companies reduce benefit levels to keep costs the same and not spend \$400k more. The district should be cutting expenses and not increasing. Your trend of increasing costs per student is terrible. In the experience of my boys in school now, no teachers they have have done any video meetings like zoom. They rarely speak to them. Once every three weeks is their experience and some teachers never do so. My boys are done each day on average in 2 hours or less - total. Most of their teachers post an assignment and/or article and that is all. I could do that as a teacher in 10 minutes per day. How can the school board not hold teachers accountable? I manage many people remotely and would never allow such under performance. Someone should set the bar a bit higher before dolling out more cash for less work in a time of economic crisis. I propose a 20% pay cut for everyone working in the school district. Join the rest of us. You are not entitled to be elitist.

Chad Dalles

CFO

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