

**Revised**

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, November 10, 2021 at 7:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug High School.

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

Board members absent: Ms. Geraci and Mr. Hicks

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance, Mr. Brough, Human Resources Specialist, and Mr. Pietrasko, Director of Infrastructure and Security Technology

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

**Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Approval of Agenda**

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

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

**Public Comment**

Jim Armstrong, from Middlefield, came to the meeting to voice his thanks to those who have spent time on the board and noted that they are not glorified positions, but aim to make sure that things are the best they can be for the students. He wished luck to the people taking over and hope that they have the vision to remember that schools are places for students and not a political forum. Mr. Armstrong believes that kids deserve the best education that they can get and feels that the current board has followed that vision.

**CRHS Reporters - Nora O'Connell, Logan Palardy and Rebecca Tobin**

Rebecca Tobin reported that the Music Department recently had their first concert back in the auditorium and it went really well. The next concert will be the holiday concert on December 15<sup>th</sup> and there will be a Show Choir and Jazz Band concert on January 13<sup>th</sup>. Rebecca thanked all of the outgoing members of the board for their support.

Nora O'Connell reported that the Girls' Powder Puff game will be held after school on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. The French Honor Society is holding a French feast to inform students about French culture. The Ecology club recently hosted a trash clean-up where 12 bags of trash were collected and sorted. The Language Honor Societies recently held their induction ceremony and the Community Round-Up will happen on December 4<sup>th</sup> with a drop-off format like last year. DECA is holding a food drive to benefit the St. Elizabeth's House and Friendship Center. Social Media Kindness Day was yesterday. The Global Health Class is holding various fundraisers. The first quarter just ended and grades have closed. CRHS

POPs is holding its annual poinsettia and wreath sale. The grade class councils are working on getting different fundraisers and school events approved, including homecoming. Nora also thanked Mr. Moore, Dr. Taylor, Ms. Geraci and Mr. Hicks for their endless time and work they put into the board and noted that their hard work has not gone unnoticed. She also welcomed the new board members.

Logan Palardy reported that the girls' soccer team is currently in the second round of the state tournament and won that game 8-0 today. They will advance to the quarterfinals on Friday. The boys' soccer team finished their season 2-13-1, however they had a big win against North Branford on Senior Day. Boys' cross country came in fifth at the Shoreline Conference Championship, after placing ninth the past three years. Junior Hayden Gonzalez was named an all-conference athlete this year. The team also placed fifth at the state's meet, after placing 16<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> in the last two years. They also received two trophies for third place at two separate invitationals. The girls' cross country team had similar results, placing fifth at Shorelines and had two all-conference athletes, Elizabeth Sorensen and Alison Vigue. The girls placed sixth at the Class S state meet. Volleyball was seeded fourth in Shorelines and won their first states game. Standout players in volleyball are Chloe Schaefer, number one in the Shoreline Conference for overall assists, and Ava Morena, number three for aces and scores an ace 25.9 percent of the time she serves.

Football is doing very well this season, with five wins and two losses. They are seeded third in the conference and will play Cromwell/Portland this Saturday. Anthony Tote is a standout player, having 680 rushing yards and five touchdowns, but sadly tore his ACL last weekend. Jack Manning has three interceptions this season. Logan also thanked the outgoing board members.

Mr. Moore thanked the students for all of the work they put into reporting to the board.

### **Approval of Minutes**

#### **A. Board of Education regular meeting - October 13, 2021**

*Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2021 Board of Education regular meeting, as presented.*

Mrs. Booth noted that, on page one under CRHS Reporters, the word "is" should be removed. She also noted, on page two under Well-Being, the word "sent" should be "went." She also noted that, under the Director of Finance's report, should read "presented" to the board on February 9<sup>th</sup>. In the next paragraph, it should read "come up with" a weekday date.

*In favor of approving the minutes of the October 13, 2021 Board of Education regular meeting, as amended: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.*

#### **Next Board Meeting - December 8, 2021 at 7:00 PM**

### **Election/Referendum Results**

Mr. Moore reported that Jason Stone, Amanda Betty, Lindsay Dahlheimer and John Mennone were all elected to the Board of Education from Durham.

Mr. Moore also reported that the referendum to approve the closure of John Lyman School passed in Durham, but failed in Middlefield which means the question failed. Mr. Yamartino added that, given the referendum did not pass, the district is obligated to continue to operate the school for the foreseeable future. He added that over the past several years, all bonding requirements for John Lyman School have been excluded. Mr. Yamartino would like to know what the timing would be to get a referendum for capital to repair and improve John Lyman School, particularly in light of supply chain issues. He would also like to review what the end-of-life capital items are tonight.

Mrs. Neubig reviewed that the total that would be required for John Lyman was \$4.25 million, with end-of-life emergent systems at \$2.77 million which was rounded to \$2.8. She felt that it was important to note that these figures were calculated back in 2014 or 2015 during the feasibility study. At the time the district was studied for grade reconfiguration, Lyman was not included. Mrs. Neubig explained that the criteria for end-of-life emergent systems are things that, if they were to go down, school could not open the next day. She acknowledged that there are a couple of things on the list that could be subjective, such as ADA improvements.

Mrs. Neubig added that things on this list were already at end-of-life four years ago when she joined the district and since that time, other things have been added and are not included in the \$2.8 million. She explained that a lot of the items that are over their useful life are because of the amazing maintenance staff that can fix anything. She has been told that the two major manufacturers of boiler parts have closed down until January 1<sup>st</sup> and there will probably be a 30 percent mark-up by the time the parts become available. Mrs. Neubig then reviewed the specific items included on the list of emergent end-of-life systems that totals the \$2.8 million.

Mr. Moore explained that a Utilization Committee meeting is scheduled for next Thursday and they should review those numbers. Mrs. Neubig stated that it will take an investment of maybe \$10,000 and a month of time for the architects to come out to update the numbers. Mrs. Booth asked if there was a different option and Mrs. Neubig did not feel there was. Dr. Schuch felt that they should authorize Mrs. Neubig to have the architects conduct the study so that the right numbers are available.

Mr. Yamartino asked the board to authorize the administration to refresh all of the quotes as expeditiously as possible. He is concerned about what will happen if a boiler goes down and school has to close and felt that it would be totally disruptive to the students' education. Mr. Yamartino felt that the supply chain for these kinds of parts will move even further out. He would like to review the other items before coming up with a time line.

Mrs. Neubig listed the many items that will come to end-of-life in 2022. She most recently added installing new playground equipment (per cycle), sports fields, water heater, roof, septic and well which will all come up in the future. The roof, septic and well are not included in the \$4.25 million number. Again, these are all 2015 numbers.

Mrs. Booth noted that the board has been told that they are not transparent and someone recently posted the letter from the church in Meriden that stated the building was in excellent condition. She felt that the public needs to know that the church was aware of all of the end-of-life needs of the building and the district was totally transparent about what was required.

Mr. Yamartino added that many people on social media were saying that the board was being deceptive in saying that capital improvements were needed when the church said it was in excellent shape. He credited the maintenance staff with having a 1954 Chevy that is in excellent shape, but the children need to be educated in a 2021 Chevy or at least a 1990. Mr. Yamartino felt that most people don't realize how badly the roof leaks which could promote mold growth. Other people are saying that some needs are emergent, but we can wait on the others. Mr. Yamartino felt that bond counsel fees could be as much as \$30,000 to \$50,000 on the \$2 million bonding and would then need to be spent again in a year or two for the additional repairs. He felt they would be better off bonding the entire amount up-front and reminded everyone that they don't actually take the money and pay interest until the work is being done.

Mrs. Booth asked if things at the other schools will need to be replaced as well and should be included in the bonding as well. Mrs. Neubig noted that the \$6.9 million bonding did include some things at both Memorial and Brewster that have not been done yet. Mrs. Booth also felt that the board could not officially vote to get the new numbers since it is not on the agenda.

Mr. Yamartino asked what the time frame would look like for a new bonding issue. Mrs. Neubig felt that it could be done by the December 8<sup>th</sup> board meeting and on a referendum for a Tuesday in January. The requirements are that they have a meeting to set a district meeting, the district meeting is held followed by a special board meeting to send the question to referendum and then 30 days before the referendum can happen. She felt that it could happen before the end of January and they have looked at both January 18<sup>th</sup> and January 25<sup>th</sup> if it was done at the December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. It could be sooner if the board held a special meeting before that. Mr. Yamartino felt they could wait for the December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting which would allow time to get new numbers, have a Utilization meeting and have the new board members weigh in as well.

Mrs. Neubig noted that it could take longer than a month to get new numbers on all of the schools and Mr. Yamartino felt that they should focus on John Lyman at this time. Mr. Roraback added that while this level of bonding seems to be a lot, they had not scheduled John Lyman to close before 2023 anyway and it was inevitable.

Mr. Moore encouraged the new board members to attend the Utilization Committee meeting on November 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM.

Dr. Schuch wanted the board's agreement to move forward with spending the money to get the new numbers and Mrs. Booth added she didn't feel there was another option. She hoped that the people who voted no on the question understood that though she didn't feel it was clear to everyone. Mr. Yamartino agreed that a lot of people in the public were saying that the board was being untruthful and not transparent. He mentioned that he would like to see the district work out an agreement with both communities to begin reserving capital for the district.

Dr. Friedrich thanked Mr. Yamartino for his attention to this issue over the last few years. Mr. Roraback also felt that including community members on committees has been helpful. Mr. Yamartino noted that he has had conversations with the First Selectmen of both towns about this issue.

**Committee Reports****A. Policy Committee Meeting - October 20, 2021****1. Second read and possible vote on Advertising Policy**

Mrs. Booth noted that she would like to see language added to the policy that political signage would not be allowed and Mrs. Neubig stated that any changes that were discussed at the Policy meeting have been included. Mr. Moore gave a quick summary of the policy. Mrs. Booth reminded everyone that if the policy is not going well, it can be stopped. Dr. Friedrich then suggested two small wording changes.

*Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the Community Relations, Advertising, Promotion and Promotional Activities policy as amended here tonight.*

Mrs. Petrella asked what will happen with the money generated by this policy. Mr. Moore explained that if the district is doing the advertising, it will go into the General Fund. If an agent is doing it, they will be responsible for the expenditures, conforming to Title IX and report annually to the district. Mr. Roraback added that it will all be done without using district resources, except for the agreement with the contractor and approval of the actual advertising.

*In favor of approving the Community Relations, Advertising, Promotion and Promotional Activities policy as amended: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino.*

**Communications**

Mr. Moore reminded everyone that tomorrow is Veterans Day and thanked all veterans, including Dr. Schuch. He asked any other veterans to please stand and there was applause by all. Mr. Moore explained that each of the schools will have programs designed to recognize veterans.

Mr. Moore also reported that Ben Carroll, a senior, has asked to serve on the Well-Being Committee. He has expressed interest in dealing with social and emotional problems.

Dr. Friedrich read his letter of resignation to the board, effective December 8, 2021. Family health issues make it impossible for him to continue to fully participate in board activities. Mr. Moore thanked him for his eight years of service and explained that Dr. Friedrich's replacement will have to be elected at a town meeting within 30 days from his resignation.

Mrs. Booth received a note from Katie Willett asking the board to look into before-school programming again.

Mr. Yamartino noted that the board had also received a letter from Mr. Hicks thanking everyone for working with him over the years.

**Superintendent's Report (if applicable)**

Dr. Schuch reported that the girls' volleyball team was defeated tonight in the second round of the state tournament.

Dr. Schuch also congratulated the new members of the board and assured that they will do everything to bring them up to speed as quickly as possible. Mrs. Maloney will reach out to the new members to hopefully schedule some time with them.

Dr. Schuch reported that a few folks have requested video recordings of the board meetings and those have been sent to them. He feels that it may be easier to just post the videos on the district's YouTube channel, however there are ADA-related issues with things like closed captioning. He does not see that on other districts' YouTube channels, but it may be something to consider. He asked if the board would be okay to have them get a little more information about this and no one had any objection to that. Mr. Pietrasko explained the videos need to be either fully transcribed or fully subtitled if they are available after-the-fact. Mrs. Booth added that just because other districts are doing it doesn't mean they're doing the right thing. Mr. Yamartino also suggested that they find out what the consequence would be if they did not have it subtitled. Mr. Roraback also suggested amping up the quality of the recording.

Dr. Schuch also reported that the approval for the COVID vaccine for ages 5 to 11 was given last week, but they do believe individual families need to make their decisions. However, they do feel that the more individuals that get vaccinated, the safer the schools and communities will be and hopefully the quicker the mitigation strategies can be relieved.

The Screen and Stay quarantine rules for schools may also help to eliminate a lot. Basically, if a child is identified as a close contact to a positive case in school but they've been masked, distanced and are unvaccinated and asymptomatic, the child is allowed to return to school upon parent choice. This has come about because there have just not been transmissions in the school setting because of the mitigation strategies. This policy applies to K-12 and all employees, but only to the school day itself and does not allow for any extracurricular activities. Parents will have to screen for up to 14 days, but do not have to report daily. The state has identified chorus, band and physical education as activities that may need to be modified.

Dr. Schuch also noted that the CIAC may be putting another waiver in place to not require masks for fully vaccinated student athletes during competition. Masks would still be required on the bench and during practices.

Mrs. Booth stated that she understood that the district has to accept and approve the Screen and Stay rules and Dr. Schuch noted that they were under the assumption that the board would support this as they would want as many students in school as possible. He agreed that it is technically optional, but he believes it would be difficult to defend a decision not to do it. Dr. Schuch reiterated that it is the parents' choice to keep the child home and they would be offered education which may include remote learning. Mrs. Booth also asked who would police this policy and explained that this policy only applies if the student was exposed at school. Dr. Schuch believed that any notification would come through Parent Square along with the requirements of daily health screening. The parents only have to attest to one form that they will follow the requirements and do not have to report daily.

Mr. Brough added that there has been a relatively very small percentage of students that have had contact within the school environment.

Mrs. Booth also asked if the district was allowed to ask for proof of vaccination and Dr. Schuch stated that they could. Mr. Yamartino asked if the CIAC guidelines will be approved by the Department of Health and Mr. Brough explained that the CIAC is working in conjunction with the Departments of Health and Education. Dr. Schuch added that they have also now allowed soloists to remove their masks if they are vaccinated and appropriately distanced.

Dr. Schuch reported that they had another Reimagining Education gathering on Election Day with approximately 40 participants. The energy continues to rise and there was more parent and community participation than before as well as staff from all five schools. Responses continue to be overwhelmingly positive and they feel it is important to continue to offer these gatherings. As of now, over 75 people want to stay connected and continue with this work. Dr. Schuch offered to work with the new board members on this as well.

They are still hoping to get more young learners involved in the process. Mrs. Booth thought that some middle school students would be willing to attend shorter sessions. Dr. Schuch added that a communication strategy will be part of this as well.

### **Director of Finance's Report**

Mrs. Neubig reported that the district has expended 29 percent of the budget and received 34 percent of revenue. MTA is at 12 percent expended and 18 percent revenue received. The pension contribution was funded in October for \$315,000. The auditors have finished up their work and they are waiting to see draft financial statements. The auditors are scheduled to report at the December ERC meeting.

On October 19<sup>th</sup>, Mrs. Neubig provided the enrollment allocations to both towns. Durham has experienced a decrease of 2.24 percent down to 64.5 percent, while Middlefield increased 2.24 percent up to 35.5 percent. Durham is losing 79 students and Middlefield is gaining six.

Mr. Moore stated that they received a letter from the state noting that the allocation of board membership did not change based on the census, with six from Durham and four from Middlefield.

Mr. Yamartino confirmed that the district-wide enrollment is 1,346 students and Mrs. Neubig stated that she has 1,352 but agreed that this is the first time the district has dropped below 1,400. MTA has four from the district, with a total of 16.

Mr. Yamartino also asked why MTA's expenditures are so low at this point and Mrs. Neubig stated that some things don't happen until later in the year. Enrollment at MTA is a little higher than this time last year.

### **New Business**

- A. Vote to authorize the superintendent to sign the local bridge program supplemental application and any associated agreements between the State of Connecticut and Regional School District 13**

Mrs. Neubig explained that the district was awarded the local bridge program grant for the culvert and asked for the board to authorize the superintendent to sign off on the supplemental action. The grant is just under \$550,000 and will pay for 40 to 50 percent of the culvert replacement in the summer of 2022.

*Dr. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to resolve that Doug Schuch, Superintendent of Regional School District 13, is authorized to sign the local bridge program supplemental application and any associated agreements between the State of Connecticut and Regional School District 13 for Pickett Lane over Herzig Brook, bridge number 037010.*

*In favor of resolving that Doug Schuch, Superintendent of Regional School District 13, is authorized to sign the local bridge program supplemental application and any associated agreements between the State of Connecticut and Regional School District 13 for Pickett Lane over Herzig Brook, bridge number 037010: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

#### **B. Possible vote to establish date of district meeting to accept transfer of Korn School**

Mr. Moore reported that the Town of Durham is planning to have a vote next Monday to accept the MOU on the transfer of Korn School from the district. In order to accept that, there needs to be a district meeting, followed by a board meeting to accept and transfer the decision. Dr. Taylor clarified that the attorneys have stated that this district meeting is legally necessary, but he felt that this could be a dangerous vote when it comes to the acceptance of the transfer. If the vote does not go through, the transfer cannot happen. Dr. Taylor felt that they should have that authority already and added that he believes there are a lot of people in town that do not want this transfer to happen because of the expenditures that will be necessary. Mr. Moore confirmed that this is the procedure that they have to follow per the attorneys.

Mr. Moore reviewed that they will get a proposal from the Town of Durham to accept the transfer of the property, what the property looks like with the boundaries and \$1.00. Everybody in the room will then vote and attendees can be from both towns. Mrs. Booth summarized that if the vote does not pass at the district meeting, then the school does not go to the town and the district will still own it, regardless of the referendum passing. Dr. Taylor would like to see this in writing from the attorneys. Dr. Schuch noted that he and Mrs. Neubig pushed back pretty hard with the attorneys on this, but were not able to move forward with the negotiations. Mrs. Booth asked if the vote will be by hand or written and Mr. Moore stated that it could be by hand as it just needs to be a plurality.

Dr. Taylor encouraged the public who are in favor of this transfer come out to vote and noted that Middlefield will also be responsible for paying if the school doesn't transfer to Durham. Mrs. Booth reiterated that the demolition costs would be \$1 million at least. Mr. Moore added that they will have the attorney present at the district meeting as well.

*Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to hold a district meeting on Wednesday, December 1, 2021 at 7:00 PM in the auditorium at Coginchaug Regional High School, to accept transfer of Korn School, contingent of Durham's acceptance of the MOU with a special meeting of the Board of Education immediately following.*



*In favor of holding a district meeting on Wednesday, December 1, 2021 at 7:00 PM in the auditorium at Coginchaug Regional High School, to accept transfer of Korn School, contingent of Durham's acceptance of the MOU with a special meeting of the Board of Education immediately following: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

Dr. Taylor asked if there will be communication to everyone about this meeting and Mr. Yamartino felt that there should be a mailer to every household describing the issue. Mrs. Petrella felt it was important for people to realize what happens if it passes and what happens if it doesn't.

### **Recognition of outgoing Board of Education members**

Mrs. Booth read the following into the minutes: "Regional School District 13 Board of Education, Durham and Middlefield, Connecticut; be it known by all those present that, on this date, Christine Geraci, distinguished Board of Education member since 2017, is duly recognized and acknowledged for her dedication to the children and citizens of the Regional School District 13 and whereas Christine Geraci, having served with honor hereby concludes this challenge for the responsibility of educating our youth; be it known that, by these words, that her deeds, her intelligence and her financial expertise will be long remembered by her peers, the towns of Middlefield and Durham and, indeed, our children. And whereas Christine Geraci served this district as a Board of Education member and treasurer, her dedication to special education students and programming, as well as the well-being and safety of all students and staff will long be remembered as a guide for those that follow in her future public service. And whereas Christine Geraci, whose attention to detail and thoughtfulness during the budgeting process, has been an asset who has also helped the board to improve communication and whereas Christine Geraci demonstrated her tireless work ethic on many subcommittees for this board, most notably the Educational Resources, Finance, Human Resources, Policy and Utilization Committees. Her ability to be fiscally responsible and her expertise in budgeting helped maintain a stable budget for many years; and whereas Christine Geraci is a respected and admired member of the Regional District 13 Board of Education whose determination, intelligence and financial knowledge have strengthened this school district and elevated the work of the entire district. Therefore, be it resolved that we, the members of the Regional School District 13 Board of Education, on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2021, celebrate Christine Geraci and encourage others to do the same and join us in recognizing Christine Geraci, a leader who made an extraordinary difference in the success of this school district and the advancement of its mission. All this is with our sincere gratitude for your years of unselfish service. By your actions, you have distinguished yourself and brought great pride upon your community, our schools and hundreds of children who remember you for all the good work you have done."

Mrs. Petrella read the following into the minutes: "Regional School District 13 Board of Education, Durham and Middlefield, Connecticut; be it known by all those present that, on this date, Andrew Taylor, distinguished Board of Education member since 2016, is duly recognized and acknowledged for his dedication to the children and citizens of Regional School District 13; and whereas Andrew Taylor, having served with honor hereby concludes this challenge for the responsibility of educating our youth; be it known that, by these words, that his deeds, his deep concern for students and their education, his desire for students to be recognized for their achievements, his willingness to firmly state these desires and his strong support for the implementation of programs and practices that encourage a high level of student academic achievement will long be remembered by his peers, the towns of Middlefield and Durham and, indeed, our children. And whereas Andrew Taylor served this district as a Board of

Education member, his high level of preparedness and attention to details regarding issues, his work ethic to optimize the budget and prioritize resources was remarkable and will long be remembered as a guide for those that follow in future public service. And whereas Andrew Taylor listened intently to others' ideas and concerns and was always courteous and respectful to other board members and the public; and whereas Andrew Taylor demonstrated his tireless work ethic on many subcommittees for this board, most notably the Educational Resources, Policy, Student Achievement and Utilization Committees. His commitment and intelligence as a volunteer have strengthened the school district; his advocacy for personalized learning for students and high academic achievement as well as his support and commitment to interdisciplinary learning and STEAM education have been an asset to our district. And whereas Andrew Taylor is a respected and admired member, having been a dedicated volunteer whose commitment and intelligence have strengthened the school district and elevated the work of the Regional 13 Board of Education. Therefore, be it resolved that we, the members of the Regional School 13 Board of Education, on this 10<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2021, celebrate Andrew Taylor and encourage others to do the same and join us in recognizing Andrew Taylor, a leader who made an extraordinary difference in the success of this school district and the advancement of its mission. All this is with our sincere gratitude for your years of unselfish service. By your actions, you have distinguished yourself and brought great pride upon your community, our schools and hundreds of children who will remember you for all the good work you have done.”

Dr. Taylor thanked everyone and noted that they spend so many hours together, they feel like family. He thanked the public for the opportunity and honor to serve on the board for the last five years. The experience has been rewarding and has personally transformed him. He learned that the community begins and ends with the education of the next generation and is the one thing in the community that truly binds everyone together. He has learned how to work with others who have different viewpoints and accept their decisions. He has learned the true value of communication and connections and has gained a lot of new friends in the process. He quoted Einstein, “education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think.” Dr. Taylor felt that this is an uncertain time, with competing versions of truth and reality and a time where opinions are amplified in every corner. It is a time of vast and seemingly ever-expanding information, but where few seem to possess the skill sets necessary for navigation. It's a time of increasing animosity and me-first individualism that appears to be rotting the core of America. We live in a world of rapidly shifting values and unclear categories. Learners need an expanded tool set from education to cope with the surrounding increasingly interconnected and complex world, designed to empower them to thrive and succeed. Learners need to be met with innovative and out-of-the-box pedagogical instruction and to instill a desire to question everything and to build foundations of personal knowledge under rigorous self-assessment and cynicism. Dr. Taylor feels that is the primary challenge of the board moving forward, to meet the needs of the learners and to train them to think. Again, he thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve.

Dr. Friedrich read the following into the minutes: “Regional School District 13 Board of Education, Durham and Middlefield, Connecticut; be it known by all those present that, on this date, Robert Moore, distinguished Board of Education member since 2015, is duly recognized and acknowledged for his dedication to the children and citizens of Regional School District 13 and whereas Robert Moore, having served with honor hereby concludes this challenge for the responsibility of educating our youth; be it known that, by these words, that his deeds, his sincere dedication to District 13 students, staff and community, his dedicated attendance at many concerts, plays, sports activities and other school functions, his calming demeanor especially during heated discussions and debates, his steady leadership through significant changes that have occurred in the district and his genuine love and concern for the students in

this district will be long remembered by his peers, the towns of Middlefield and Durham and, indeed, by our children. And whereas Robert Moore served this district as a Board of Education member and chairman, his steady and calm leadership as the board navigated through a number of difficult situations and decisions over the years will long be remembered as a guide for those who follow in future public service. And whereas Robert Moore has dedicated his life to the students, staff and community of Regional School District 13, his work ethic and commitment have greatly assisted in moving the district and community forward. And whereas Robert Moore demonstrated his tireless work ethic on many subcommittees for this board, most notably the Building, Educational Resources, Human Resources, Strategic Coherence Planning, Student Achievement and Well-Being Committees. His advocacy for staff and students and his assistance with the initiating of the global partnership with China will long be remembered. And whereas Robert Moore is a respected and admired member and leader of the Regional 13 Board of Education, having been a dedicated volunteer whose commitment and passion have strengthened the school district and community. Therefore, be it resolved that we, the members of the Regional School District 13 Board of Education, on this 10<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2021, celebrate Robert Moore and encourage others to do the same and join us in recognizing Robert Moore, a leader who made an extraordinary difference in the success of this school district and the advancement of its mission. All this with our sincere gratitude for your years of unselfish service. By your actions, you have distinguished yourself and brought great pride upon your community, our schools and hundreds of children who remember you for all the good work you have done.”

Mr. Moore thanked everyone and agreed with Dr. Taylor that the board is really a family, spending a great deal of time together. He felt that they needed to be proud of keeping the budget flat for six years, despite all the other challenges including making it through COVID and seeing student achievement scores go up so high in three or four years. There has been a great deal of change, including hiring a new superintendent and principals which took a tremendous amount of thought and commitment. Mr. Moore has been writing a letter to everyone and will have it to them by the end of the month. He has spent his whole life in public service, but of all of that time working on changing the environment in Connecticut, his last six years here have been the most rewarding. He believes it's most rewarding because he handed out that diploma to kids that have gone through the district. Watching them grow from kindergartners to high school, you know that you have had an impact on their life. Mr. Moore thanked everyone for letting him serve and reminded the new board members of all the hard work ahead, but to know how rewarding it is. Mr. Moore reviewed the mission of the district and stressed how important it is.

Mr. Yamartino read the following into the minutes: “Regional School District 13 Board of Education, Durham and Middlefield, Connecticut; be it known by all those present that, on this date, Norman Hicks, distinguished Board of Education member since 1996, is duly recognized and acknowledged for his dedication to the children and citizens of Regional School District 13 and whereas Norman Hicks, having served with honor hereby concludes this challenge for the responsibility of educating our youth; be it known that, by these words, that his deeds, his work ethic, strong values and long-term commitment to the district as a Board of Education member, his extensive knowledge of Robert's Rules, his diplomatic monitoring of board communication and his kind reminder to not reply to all when responding to emails and his dedication to developing a quality education for all students with a rigorous curriculum will be long remembered by his peers, the towns of Middlefield and Durham and, indeed, our children. And whereas Norman Hicks served this district as a Board of Education member and secretary, the experiences he brought as a teacher and member of the ACES Governing Board to the district as well as his influence to provide cost-effective education while improving student achievement will long be remembered as a guide for those that follow in future public service. And whereas Norman Hicks' work

ethic and commitment have moved the district and community forward and whereas Norman Hicks demonstrated his tireless work ethic on many subcommittees for this board, most notably the Building, Grounds and Transportation, Curriculum, Educational Resources, Human Resources, Utilization and Well-Being Committees. Additionally, he served as the magnet school committee representative and in the role of chairman of the ACES Governing Board. He has been a dedicated volunteer whose knowledge, intelligence and commitment to students and staff have strengthened the school district and elevated the work of the entire district. And whereas Norman Hicks is a respected and admired leader and member of the Regional 13 District Board of Education. Therefore, be it resolved that we, the members of the Regional School District 13 Board of Education, on this 10<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2021, celebrate Norman Hicks and encourage others to do the same and join us in recognizing Norman Hicks, a leader who made an extraordinary difference in the success of this school district and the advancement of its mission. All this is with our sincere gratitude for your many years of unselfish service. By your actions, you have distinguished yourself and brought great pride upon your community, our schools and hundreds of children who will remember you for all the good work you have done.”

Mr. Moore explained that Mr. Hicks is on his way to South Korea with ACES to evaluate a global language center to bring back to Connecticut and sent a letter to the board. He also reminded Mr. Moore that the board needs to replace him as the representative to ACES. Reading from Mr. Hicks’ letter, “it’s been an extraordinarily humbling experience to have been part of RSD 13 Board of Education for the past 26 years. I have achieved great personal satisfaction in the good work as done by you as well as the many board members that were there before you as well as four superintendents. Regional 13 has become stronger and more vibrant thanks to the teamwork of boards, past and present, and the parent and community support that is so important. Will miss you all dearly as I consider you my Wednesday evening family. I wish my departing members the various best in their new roles as civilians, so to speak, and I encourage you, the remaining members, to continue to govern the district with the same core ethical values that we continue to instill in our children. I am confident that the good work of the board will be ongoing.”

Mr. Hicks has also agreed to volunteer to moderate the annual district meeting and other public hearings, as necessary. Mr. Moore was appreciative of all of the knowledge and history that Mr. Hicks had and particularly his commitment to the Policy Committee.

Dr. Schuch reviewed that this is the first time the Board of Education members were elected by ballot in Durham and he thanked Mrs. Maloney who helped get all the proclamations together, along with the other board members. He had gifts for the outgoing board members as a small token of the district’s appreciation to help them remember the good times. Dr. Schuch noted that he has only had a short time to work with the outgoing board members, but many of the staff have spent years with them. On behalf of the staff and Dr. Schuch, he reiterated their thanks for their tireless service. He also thanked Mrs. Maloney for the gourmet cupcakes and cookies that will be available after the meeting.

### **Public Comment**

Julia Talbert-Slagle, a junior at Coginchaug and a member of the Durham-Middle field Racial Justice team, read a letter to the board regarding equity, diversity and equality. They recommended that the district recognize and observe Indigenous Peoples Day starting in 2022 and on every second Monday in October.

**Adjournment**

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

*In favor of adjourning the regular meeting of the Board of Education: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

Meeting was adjourned at 9:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First