

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, January 12, 2022 at 7:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board members present: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello (by phone), Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone

Board members absent: None

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance, Mrs. Keane, Director of Student Services and Special Education, Mrs. DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment and Mr. Brough, Human Resources Specialist

Mrs. Petrella called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Mrs. Booth made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Public Comment

Carl Stoup, from Durham, stated that he listened to the Building Committee meeting and noted that the public could not see what was going on at the meeting. He would like to see a standard set-up for all meetings so that the public can watch, hear and speak at all meetings. Mr. Stoup was surprised, but not surprised, that the field house came up again at the Building Committee meeting but he understands that it is a real want. It would be convenient to have it next to the field, but to add fixed costs to a budget that's already overblown with a high per pupil cost is going way overboard. There are nice facilities close to the field that can be used and the town has Korn School. Mr. Stoup felt that the district has John Lyman to deal with and this is bad timing for the field house.

Josh Eddinger, from Durham, also spoke about the field house but felt that that wasn't exactly what was being talked about at the Building Committee. He explained that he has done some research on the project and reviewed that back in 2009, the plans for the track renovation, turf field, field house and lights were all proposed and approved by Planning and Zoning. A neighbor appealed that decision and what eventually came out of that was that the only way that the Board of Education can have lights is to construct permanent bathroom facilities there. He noted that what is actually being proposed is a shell of a building that will hopefully, one day, hold permanent bathrooms. Mr. Eddinger doesn't believe they need a field house, but he does think that permanent bathroom facilities are necessary next to the track and field. That will unlock the ability to have lights which is actually the thing that most people want. The bathrooms and lights are both a want, but the lights have more purpose. Going through the pandemic, one of the things people have realized that is useful is having outdoor facilities. If the community had one complete with bathrooms and lights, that would be a real benefit. Mr. Eddinger believes it will enhance athletics for the district.

At this point, Mrs. Petrella interrupted Mr. Eddinger and suggested he continue his comments during Public Comment later in the meeting.

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

Nora O'Connell reported that the eighth graders will be visiting Coginchaug on January 25th for an elective fair. Chamber Choir will be performing and other clubs will be showing off their talents as well. This Friday, Global Health Class is hosting a PJ day to benefit healthcare in Honduras. Students are preparing for midterm exams that will be held next Thursday, Friday and the following Monday and Tuesday. The district had its first snow day this past Friday and overall, things at Coginchaug are going really well.

Rebecca Tobin noted that the Chamber Choir will be singing on January 25th and the Jazz Combo will perform for the eighth graders as well. The Show Choir and Jazz Band concert was postponed and will be in the spring, hopefully at an outdoor venue. The musical, Emma, the Pop Musical, rehearsals are starting next week and everyone is excited for that.

Logan Palardy reported that boys' basketball team is at 0-4, with many varsity players being quarantined. They have an upcoming home game against East Hampton this Friday at 7:00 PM. Girls' basketball is doing very, currently at 4-1. Junior Mia Poturnicki was recognized as a top player this week by the Hartford Courant. The Lyman Hall-Coginchaug Co-op Swimming team has been doing well and has a meet tomorrow at 4:00 PM. Boy's indoor track team narrowly lost to H-K, placing them second out of 12 teams in the Shoreline Conference. They tied for fourth out of 20 teams with Hale-Ray at the H-K Invitational on Monday. The SMR relay team is one second off qualifying for nationals. Girls' indoor track team also came in second at the first league meet, losing to Old Saybrook. They also came in fourth at the H-K Invitational. Sophomore Allison Vigue broke the school record for pole vault, jumping 10'1", and broke the meet record as well. Logan noted that the second place athlete jumped 7'. Girls' hockey is currently 0-4, with an upcoming game this Friday. Boy's hockey is currently 0-3, with a game against Guilford today.

Mr. Roraback asked where the indoor track meets are held and Logan explained that they go to Hillhouse High School in New Haven. The teams practice in the hallways and outside.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education Special District Meeting - December 1, 2021

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Special District Meeting on December 1, 2021, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education Special District Meeting on December 1, 2021, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback, with Ms. Betty, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, and Mr. Stone abstaining. Motion carried.

B. Board of Education Regular Meeting - December 8, 2021

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Meeting on December 8, 2021.

Mr. Roraback explained that he had voted for only Mrs. Petrella when the election of chairman was done the second time. He also felt that it would be good for the record to state that Dr. Friedrich had explained why he had the right to vote for someone that he was not going to serve under as the chair.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stone, to amend her motion to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Meeting on December 8, 2021, as amended:

In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education Regular Meeting on December 8, 2021, as amended: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone, with Mr. Moore abstaining. Motion carried.

Next Board Meeting - Board Retreat - January 22, 2022 in the CRHS Library 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Committee Reports**A. Building Committee Meeting - January 10, 2022**

Mrs. Booth reported that the Pickett Lane culvert went out to bid and work will begin in May, hopefully to be completed by August. Memorial School roof also went out to bid and they expect to get a 55 percent reimbursement from the state for that. That work will also be done over the summer of 2022. The Building Committee also talked about the field house and agreed to get more information before further discussion. The last quote was from March of 2020, so they are expecting new numbers. The hope would be to cover the existing slab and perhaps the booster clubs may want to put money in for bathrooms and other things. Once the Building Committee discussed it again, it will be brought to the full Board. Mr. Moore added that Mrs. Neubig will get some costs and Mr. Overton will get a new quote on the building. Mr. Moore will contact the booster clubs to see if they still want to participate.

Mrs. Neubig stated that the Building Committee saw the results of the RFP that ranged from a high of \$760,000 to \$394,000 for the culvert. The bids were vetted and the Building Committee voted to recommend the full Board award the bid.

Communications

Mrs. Petrella stated that she received a letter from Marie Hoyt with regard to offering a baby grand piano to the district. She received a letter from Cindy Felicia Kenyon about communication from parents to administration to establish a protocol, especially when it comes to inquiries from concerned parents regarding threats of violence. A letter was received from Bob Donahue with his concerns about some board members' activities. Mrs. Petrella also received a letter from Judy Rand, the Middlefield executive secretary, regarding Bob Yamartino letter of resignation from the Board which was effective January 1st. She received a letter from Melinda Lauderdale regarding her concerns with students and teachers returning to school on Monday after the break with the COVID numbers so high. Another letter was received from Matthew and Joanne Hon regarding a concern about an inappropriate library book at the

middle school. Mary Ann O'Brien also sent a letter with concerns about the in-person meeting that was held on January 5th with the COVID numbers. Donna Golub, the Town Clerk in Middlefield, wrote a letter with some questions about absentee ballots for the upcoming referendum. Janet Morganti wrote regarding comments for public hearing regarding the bond referendum which Mrs. Petrella shared during the public hearing. Mrs. Petrella received letters from Jennifer Biro, Brian and Lisa Symaczek and Teresa Hernandez who were all concerned about the lack of synchronous learning for quarantined students. Michael and Debbie O'Sullivan also wrote regarding COVID mitigation strategies and lack of synchronous learning for quarantined students. Emily Aught, from the Connecticut Examiner, wrote a letter with some questions about the \$7.5 million bond that she was going to put into an article.

Mrs. Dahlheimer was also contacted by Mary Ann O'Brien and wanted to strongly suggest adding an agenda item to talk about streamlining communication for online meetings to align with Durham and Middlefield's town meetings so that Zoom becomes the primary way for people to join meetings. The audio at the district meeting was behind by two minutes and Mrs. O'Brien stated that she couldn't tell who she was talking to.

Superintendent's Report (includes updates related to COVID)

Dr. Schuch reported that COVID is front and center once again, but wanted to start by stating what an honor it has been to serve with Mr. Yamartino and how sad it is to see him leave. He admires Mr. Yamartino for stepping into the role of First Selectman and hopes they will still be able to maintain a relationship. He thanked Mr. Yamartino on behalf of the staff, teachers and everyone in the district for his support in the re-imagining work and acknowledges that that support will not go away.

Dr. Schuch also proposed three topics that he'd like to see covered at the retreat. First, they'd like to give the board members the first look at draft pieces of the strategic plan and get thoughts and reactions to that. They will also go over some budget items at the retreat, but not present a full budget then. Lastly, Dr. Schuch had emailed the board with some thoughts about ways to streamline and think about the work they do together and with the public. He would appreciate the opportunity to have that conversation with the board.

Moving on to COVID, Dr. Schuch noted that there has been a surge in cases going back into December. The omicron variant has created a situation where case counts are much higher than everyone in the district has been accustomed to. He does feel it is a little different than when the pandemic started, however. In the beginning, there was such a magnitude of fear that school was canceled for months which may have been a bit of an overreaction. All kinds of plans were put in place over the summer and the hope was that the pandemic was behind us. Dr. Schuch feels that they are better prepared to handle it now, with more science and more epidemiology and updates coming in all the time. His position, as well as the staff's position, has been that they feel like, in spite of the high case counts, the best place for children to be is in school. They will try to continue to do that safely.

Dr. Schuch realizes that there are a few people in the community that do not agree with that and he respects and honors their perspectives. He thanked the teachers and all district employees for making it work. Not all districts have their folks responding like here in this district and that is something that we should constantly recognize and thank them for. Dr. Schuch considers every day that they are able to finish school a victory. He noted that they have been very close to closing multiple schools due to the availability of staff and thanked everyone for not having to do that. He also noted that the district's

success thus far does not guarantee that they don't reach a point where one or more of the schools will have to close. Dr. Schuch added that recent graduates who are in college have made themselves available to substitute.

Dr. Schuch also noted that the state was scrambling to react and respond to new guidance from the CDC that was received late on December 31st. It was a lot of information take in and he wanted to review it for the board. Before doing that, he thanked Bob Yamartino and Laura Francis for how they are handling things in the towns and noted that the masks they are using were received from the towns. The towns also offered some of their tests to the district, but thankfully the district was able to give them back once they received their allocation.

Mrs. Keane summarized that some of the documents are very confusing and came out very rapidly. The new information is different for people who are fully vaccinated, those that are only partially vaccinated and those who are unvaccinated. This information is based on direct recommendations from the CDC and the Department of Public Health as well as the local health department and the State of Connecticut Department of Education. Mrs. Keane thanked the teachers and staff, but also Pam Branciforte and the nursing staff. Mrs. Branciforte has put forth an amazing amount of time and effort coordinating and leading the district's charge to keep the students and staff safe and healthy. Mrs. Keane added that it has been challenging for everybody, but the resiliency, flexibility and spirit of the learners and their families to keep coming back every day has been remarkable.

The CDC has recommended that contact tracing be discontinued in school. That refers directly to contact tracing, not keeping track of positive cases. School contact tracing took an enormous of time and yielded very little success in terms of prevention. Data has shown that cases are not being transmitted in school even close to the extent that happens in the community because of strong mitigation strategies and protocols. That contact tracing prevented students from accessing in-school education for long periods of quarantine time.

Unfortunately, omicron came in at the same time as these new recommendations. Mrs. Keane felt that if they were to have tried to contact trace over the past three to four weeks, that is all administrators and nurses would be doing due to the increase in cases. The district continues to track numbers and, at the elementary school level, they are sending out Parent Square notifications to all parent if there has been a positive case in their student's classroom. At all levels, they are continuing to update the overall numbers on the website.

Mrs. Keane then explained that screen and stay started halfway through the fall which meant that if there were no symptoms, they can come to school. Now, that has been enveloped right into the new quarantine guidelines and they have lessened from 10 to 14 days down to five days. If someone is a close contact of an individual in the school environment, during the school day, they do not need to quarantine if they are asymptomatic. If they are symptomatic, there is a five-day quarantine and testing is recommended on the fifth day, but not required, for a return to school. They must be symptom-free to return to school on the sixth day. This applies to everyone, vaccinated or unvaccinated. If someone is in contact with someone who is positive outside of school and they are not vaccinated, they do have to quarantine for five days, whether they have symptoms or not.

Dr. Schuch added that the Department of Public Health and the CIAC just yesterday stated that the quarantine guidance for athletics will mirror what Mrs. Keane just described. Mrs. Keane added that

students who are unvaccinated must quarantine for the five days as it is still considered an out-of-school event at this moment.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if a child who was previously unvaccinated, but got COVID was now considered vaccinated. Mrs. Keane stated that they are still unvaccinated, but they do not have to quarantine for 90 days unless they are symptomatic. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if the district is requiring a PCR test or anything and Mrs. Keane stated that they are not requiring any testing to come back to school as long as they are asymptomatic. She noted that if someone has had COVID, they can test positive for up to 90 days even being asymptomatic.

Mrs. Booth felt that stay and screen is kind of still in place because of the exposure differences in school and out. She added that if someone tests positive and quarantines for five days, they are supposed to wear a mask for 10 days even in their home, which she believes people are not doing. Mrs. Booth felt that there is a lot of spread through family members because they aren't doing that. She also asked about the CIAC guidelines and Mrs. Keane clarified that they do not need to quarantine if the exposure was in school, but sports are still considered to be an outside event. Mrs. Booth thought that if a child was exposed at school, they were not supposed to do any sports as the previous stay and screen was only to allow children to attend school. Mrs. Keane agreed and will look in the update to see how that applies. Mrs. Booth felt it was good that they are giving people tests and accepting home tests, however any time the test is not performed by a medical professional there is a high risk for inaccurate testing.

Dr. Schuch added that the district had held firm about their athletes wearing masks and the guidance is now requiring everyone to mask. Masks can be removed for individual sports where they can be six feet away from others. The CDC guidelines also require conditioning after exposure and a pulmonary test must be done.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked whose guidelines are being followed during away games and Mrs. Keane explained that the guidelines are the same everywhere and everybody has to be masked.

Mr. Brough seconded the efforts of Mrs. Branciforte, the district's COVID liaison, for all of her work and support she has given to everyone. He explained that two of the biggest strategies are testing and masks. With the increase in the omicron variant, they have found that testing was very difficult for everyone. The state pivoted on Executive Order 13G which deals with unvaccinated staff members testing weekly and suspended that for the holidays. The state did promise the district tests and also indicated that N95 masks are a very good tool in combating the increase in the omicron variant and would supply them as well. That was supposed to happen on January 3rd, but that didn't quite happen. The district did receive 630 antigen home test kits on January 5th and they were distributed to all of the schools that same day. Parents and students were able to complete a Google form in order to request test kits. As of now, 45 test kits have been distributed at the high school, 15 at Strong, 16 at Memorial, 19 at John Lyman and 20 at Brewster. Each building has 90 test kits, so the supply is still okay. It has been a godsend for unvaccinated staff members and has enabled them to continue to work in the buildings.

Mr. Brough stated that they had not heard anything about N95 masks until Thursday and he thanked both towns for supplying them. Kevin Donovan, the emergency management director in Durham, has stated that they have an additional 400. On Friday, the custodial staff distributed the masks to all of the buildings as well, with each school getting 120 masks.

Mrs. Booth asked who the masks were for and Mr. Brough explained that they are for staff and students. Dr. Schuch felt that they would be for the older learners and would not fit the younger ones as well. Mrs. Booth is happy that they are offer to the N95 masks to staff, but noted that, in the medical field, they do wear a bib over the N95 to help them last longer.

Mr. Roraback asked if there was any real guidance about how long the N95 masks last and Mr. Brough would strongly suggest discarding the mask after wearing it all day for two or three days. The demand for masks has been steady, but not overwhelming. Mrs. Booth added that, in the medical world, unless someone is fit-tested, the N95 mask is no better than any other. She added that they are told to wear them until they break. It was also noted that the KN95 is not recognized in the US for the same use as the N95.

Mrs. Keane added that they are not contact tracing in the middle school or high school for classes, so they would not tell anyone if they had been exposed. They would not have to quarantine from sports unless they have been told that they have been in close contact. Mrs. Booth thought that students can still participate if exposed as long as they provide proof of vaccination and are asymptomatic. Mrs. Keane agreed and added that no one is required to show vaccination status. The CDC did change vaccination status, but the state Department of Public Health did not. Dr. Schuch felt that that might be coming and he knows some colleges are requiring the booster to consider someone fully vaccinated. He reviewed that the booster may not stop someone from getting COVID, but should stop the symptoms from being as severe.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked how mitigation is working in the music department and Mrs. Keane explained that nothing has changed there. Dr. Schuch noted that there are two challenges with music performances, both with indoor gatherings and the fact that the learners have not all been together. Mrs. Booth asked if the district will be getting any more masks and Mr. Brough confirmed that they will, but he did not know when. Mr. Roraback felt that the district is blessed to even remain open. Bob Yamartino noted that Middlefield gave out masks with the test kits.

Mrs. DiMaggio echoed everyone's gratitude and admiration for the teachers, staff, nurses and the learners. At the beginning of the school year, there was a 10-day quarantine requirement and the district put together educational plans based on that, knowing that they would not return to the remote options that they had last year. Quarantined students were given work that was asynchronized or through hard copies (Google Classroom, iReady). At the elementary and middle school levels, teachers were asked to connect with the students at least 10 minutes a day. The high school has potential check-ins by staff. With the recent surge, a lot of students were out. The numbers are now down quite a bit and the quarantine time has been decreased.

Mrs. Booth felt that a lot of the letters they received were from high school parents and she assumed that a lot of them may have been part of Cohort C last year. She also mentioned that, last year, Cohort C students had a hard time hearing what was going on as the high school did not have a separate team as they did in the other grade levels. She had heard, from students and staff that it was not as seamless as people may have thought it was. Mrs. Booth felt that there was no reason a child cannot be at school unless they are symptomatic and Mrs. Keane added that that was true, unless they've been exposed outside of school and are not vaccinated.

Dr. Schuch met with a couple of parents about this issue and explained that that was prior to the decrease in the quarantine restrictions. There are fewer and fewer cases now and they are not as long. He felt it

would cause quite a bit of disruption to introduce remote learning. Today, there were just six learners in quarantine from the high school. Dr. Schuch felt that parents are really questioning the CDC's wisdom as to whether five days is the right number. He did, however, feel that individual teachers should be doing everything they can to stay connected with the students and help them stay up to speed. The learner has that responsibility as well. He has also encouraged parents to reach out to the teachers and ask for more, if needed.

Dr. Schuch has made it clear to the administrators that the district needs to be more than flexible about make-up work, return dates and exams. He believes the administrators have made that clear to their teams. Mrs. Dahlheimer did speak to one of the parents who wrote and she felt it was a boil-over from having been quarantined more than once.

Ms. Betty asked what the district will do for a child who needs to be kept out of school for longer than five days. Mrs. Keane noted that the district recognizes that when a student is out sick, they are sick and cannot do work. They will be supported when they are ready to come back to school. Ms. Betty asked if the child will be allowed to come back to school if they still have a cough and congestion. Mrs. Keane explained that they could, as long as they don't have a fever, per quarantine guidelines though they would be out for 14 days if they were diagnosed with COVID and continue with symptoms. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that if a child is going to be out for 14 days, the teachers will connect with them. Ms. Betty gave the example that her daughter was on quarantine for 10 days and went back to school on a Monday. Her sister was positive the following Tuesday and had nothing sent home to her the two days before the holidays. Mrs. DiMaggio encouraged her to reach out directly to the teacher.

Mr. Roraback asked if the district has a plan for when, and if, a school has to close due to lack of staff. Dr. Schuch explained that the state went from requiring remote learning to saying districts really can't or shouldn't. If the district is remote, they cannot count those days as attendance. Dr. Schuch acknowledged that a lot of the state's rules are targeted toward different types of districts but apply to all of them. He has been told that there is a commission that is studying remote learning in Connecticut and their report was supposed to have come out months ago. Mrs. DiMaggio stated that the district is supposed to submit a form to the state should that situation occur and the state would let the district know if they have to make up that day. Mr. Roraback added that one district got an exception to that because they had 182 days on their calendar.

Director of Finance's Report

Mrs. Neubig reported that the district has expended 54 percent of the budgeted expenditures and received 51 percent of budgeted revenue. MTA has expended 27 percent and received 31 percent of budgeted revenue. The independent auditors have completed the 2021-2022 school year audit and Mrs. Neubig received the copies today. It was completed without any management letter comments. The audit will be presented to the Education Resources Committee on February 9th at 6:00 PM and come to the full board for a vote to accept the report at the following meeting.

New Business**A. Vote to accept Merwin Fund Donation**

Dr. Schuch reviewed that the Charles H. Merwin trust was established in 1906 and the trust donates money to the district every year. He met with the trustees and they asked him how much money he wanted and what he would spend it on. Dr. Schuch would like the board to accept the donation of \$10,000 to be used to establish mini-grants that teachers and others could apply for if they wanted to try new things related to learner-centered education.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to accept the Merwin Fund donation of \$10,000.

Ms. Betty asked who would approve the requests for these grants and Dr. Schuch explained that there will be a team established as well as criteria for the grants.

In favor of accepting the Merwin Fund donation of \$10,000: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

B. Possible vote to approve bidder for Memorial roof replacement

Mrs. Neubig reviewed that the bid results were summarized and presented to the Building Committee on Monday, with bids ranging from \$760,000 down to \$394,000 with 55 percent being reimbursed by the state. This work will be done in 2022. Mrs. Neubig explained that they do need board approval to award the bid to the lowest qualified bidder who has been vetted by Silver Petrucelli, Mr. Croteau and Mrs. Gaudreau. The amount of the bid was \$490,000 with \$96,000 of alternates that were removed, for a total of \$394,000.

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to award the bid for Memorial School roof replacement to Gold Seal Roofing and Sheet Metal, Inc. in the amount of \$490,000 less \$96,000 of alternates for a total of \$394,000.

Mrs. Dahlheimer confirmed that this was for two sections of roof, one over the media center and one over the cafeteria, with one of them being a metal roof. Mrs. Booth asked if that RFP was included in their packets and Mrs. Neubig explained that it was not. She added that the district contracted with Silver Petrucelli to vet the bids and check references. Mrs. Neubig explained that the Pickett Lane bid was included because the board needed to look at it as a requirement of that grant. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked that the summary of the bids be sent electronically to the Building Committee and Mr. Stone noted that he would like that to be sent to the full board.

Mrs. Petrella took a vote via roll call.

In favor of awarding the bid for Memorial School roof replacement to Gold Seal Roofing and Sheet Metal, Inc. in the amount of \$490,000 less \$96,000 of alternates for a total of \$394,000: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

C. Pickett Lane culvert bid review

Mrs. Neubig stated that the packet that was provided to the board members was prepared by Nathan Jacobson. There were six bidders on this project, ranging from \$1.25 million to \$618,000. A grant has been received for 50 percent of the project cost. The lowest qualified bidder was Schumack Engineered Construction Corp. in the amount of \$618,800. A final legal review was done. Schumack did the repair of the culvert a few years ago and did an outstanding job. Their references are just outstanding and they would like to award the bid to them.

Mr. Moore added that the firm did a really good job when the district had the emergency sink hole and the bridge washed out. They did the sink hole repair at the track as well.

D. 2022-2023 District Calendar

Dr. Schuch did not feel that the district calendar needed to be voted on, but asked the board for input. Mrs. Booth noted that they usually vote on it, but she did not agree with that as they really have no say on it. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that the board votes on the first day of school and the graduation date. Mrs. Booth added that she is not in support of a four-day weekend for the Durham Fair because it is hard for parents to get that off as well. Dr. Schuch explained that he understood that that Monday was not a very productive day in school and Mrs. DiMaggio added that the teachers felt very strongly about that. She felt that having a professional development day on Monday after the fair was a big hit with both the learners and the staff.

Dr. Schuch highlighted that the first day of school would August 29, 2022 and the last day, and graduation, would be June 14, 2023. There are two more days than necessary for teachers and three more for learners as they looked at the fact that they have used at least two snow days in the past. If there are no snow days, May 26th and May 30th will be school holidays.

Mrs. Caramanello felt that when the board removed Veterans' Day as a day off, it was intended that the day would be used to honor veterans. She felt that unless that continues, the district should have that day off. Mr. Moore explained that, in the first year, every school had an assembly and some kind of activity. Veterans visited each school and were thrilled to receive the recognition. This year, some of the band members played at the Town Hall and in Middlefield as well. He agreed that, as long as students and teachers are participating in a recognition of veterans, it would be better to do that. Mrs. Caramanello agreed, but felt that there were schools that didn't do anything and she would like to be sure that that is done. Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that she pulled her kids from Strong to attend the Durham ceremony and brought them back after lunch. Mrs. Petrella added that Brewster School students sent out special thank-you notes in the mail.

Dr. Schuch reviewed that they received a request to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day on the calendar. He also explained that Juneteenth is now being recognized at the federal and possibly state level, so it has been added to the calendar. It is not part of the academic calendar, but is printed on the calendar. He asked for the board's feedback on those two items.

Dr. Schuch explained that he feels that the state will authorize the schools to operate remotely on inclement weather days. He felt that the district may have a couple of snow days, but more than that

would be remote, if possible. Dr. Schuch suspects that Connecticut will make Juneteenth a holiday at some point and they will be mandated to have the day off.

Mrs. Dahlheimer can understand Indigenous Peoples Day a little and noted that she is vice chair for Durham's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee who did have an event at the local cemetery. She will have the issue added to one of their agendas in the future.

Mrs. Booth asked if there was a reason school will be starting on a Monday this year, instead of Wednesday. Dr. Schuch explained that that was done so school can finish on June 14th as well as when Labor Day falls. Mrs. Booth felt that the shorter weeks were done to allow the younger kids to adapt to being in school.

Dr. Schuch noted that a statute was passed by the General Assembly in 2019 that stated that the graduation date can be fixed, regardless of snow days. He would hope that the graduation date remains fixed, but that may not happen this year. Everyone generally agreed.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to start school on August 29, 2022 and end school on June 14, 2023.

Mrs. Petrella took a vote by roll call.

In favor of starting school on August 29, 2022 and ending school on June 14, 2023: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Recognition of outgoing Board of Education member

Mrs. Booth read the following into the record: "Regional School District 13 Board of Education, Durham and Middlefield, Connecticut; be it known by all those present that, on this date, Robert Yamartino, 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 Robert Yamartino, 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 positive manner and enduring good sense will be long remembered and cherished by his peers, the towns of Middlefield and Durham and, indeed, our children. And whereas Robert Yamartino served this district as a Board of Education member, his commitment to the financial integrity for the sole benefit of the learners while assuring a balance for community support matched with his scrutiny to detail and accuracy and his long-term approach to capital financing will long be remembered as a guide for those that follow in future public service. And whereas Robert Yamartino was never without comments and thoughts on all actions and endeavors of the board and always shaped the debate to pursue a comprehensive analysis; and whereas Robert Yamartino demonstrated his tireless work ethic on many subcommittees for this board, most notably the Educational Resources, Playground, Policy, Strategic Coherence Planning and Utilization Committees. His ability to be fiscally responsible and his expertise in finance helped to maintain a stable budget for many years. And whereas Robert Yamartino is a respected and admired member of the Regional School District 13 Board of Education, having been a dedicated volunteer whose compassion for the best education of our learners and support and concern for all board members and the need for Middlefield and Durham as he split his skills with town leadership. Therefore, be it resolved that we, the members of the Regional School District Board of

Education, on the 12th day of January, 2022 celebrate Robert Yamartino and encourage others to do the same and join us in recognizing Robert Yamartino, 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 that will love and remember you for all of your good work you have done.”

Mr. Yamartino thanked everyone and explained that people often ask him why he volunteers. He reviewed that on Valentine’s Day in 2018, a gunman opened fire in Parkland School in Florida and that was followed with a real sense of unease and broken trust. Discussion at board meetings after that were about safety and were highly emotional. At one of those meetings, a parent asked him how many children he had in the school district and he answered that he had 1,527. Mr. Yamartino noted that today there are 1,423 students in the district, including 126 that are outplaced with four at MTA. Each of those students is an individual, with individual talents and skills. He felt that it is a huge responsibility to make sure each one of those students is educated as well as being responsible for over 350 employees. The administrators, teachers and staff are all highly dedicated, extremely talented and very good at what they do. Mr. Yamartino felt that the most important role the board has there is to provide them with a safe work environment, a challenging work environment and the tools and opportunities to grow and develop their skills and pursue their passions. On top of that, Mr. Yamartino noted that they do that with almost 70 percent of the taxes collected by the two towns and they have a responsibility to them as well.

Mr. Yamartino felt that education really sets the groundwork for the life of the student, but immediate and life-threatening decisions needed to be made when it came to COVID. When he made those decisions, he was looking at the students sitting in the classroom. Maybe they ask them to wear a mask, maybe they go against the CIAC guidelines and, with all of that, he thought about the teacher who may be pregnant or going home to take care of an infant. He thought about students who get off the bus to a grandparent who might have health issues. He had to think about the community at large and that’s what the board did. Any noble endeavor is faced with challenges and this board can live up to that challenge.

Mr. Yamartino is very optimistic about the future and sad about not being able to see some things through, such as the re-imagining education process. He knows the district has the teachers, administration, students and board members to make sure that that moves forward.

Mr. Yamartino explained that some people might feel being on the Board of Education is a thankless job and thanked everyone for serving on the board, taking their time to come forward and give to the students and community.

Mrs. Petrella stated that Mr. Yamartino will be sorely missed. Mr. Moore added that Mr. Yamartino spent a lot of time on Memorial and Lyman playgrounds and single-handedly promoted the pickle ball courts in Middlefield that are now widely used. Mr. Yamartino noted that he feels really good to know he had a small part in those facilities when he sees them being enjoyed by so many people. Everyone wished him luck with his new challenge and he assured them that he will work hard to continue to support the board in their endeavors.

Public Comment

Josh Eddinger continued by asking the board to recognize that the field house project is not really a field house, but could be a structure to unlock a lot more potential for the facility. The narrow view is that it will enhance the athletics for the district. He acknowledged that athletics are sometimes looked down upon as just recreation. He also felt that this would be a big community driver and athletic events were some of the biggest community events. Some of the games this fall were amazing, with a great community feel in a safe environment. Mr. Eddinger also felt that it is very hard for parents or grandparents to get to a 3:30 or 4:00 game and having worked from home, he was able to make more games than ever. He wondered how much more it will take to get the potential of this facility unlocked. There are many other things that could happen at the facility as well. He felt that the numbers don't have to be very big and scary at \$800,000. The estimates will come back and he believes they will find that its \$100,000 to \$150,000, with maybe \$150,000 more for lights, for a total of around \$300,000 which is less than 1 percent of the overall budget. That equates to each person in the two towns to pay \$26. Mr. Eddinger felt that the communities always pay for the things that absolutely have to get done and the things that can enhance the student experience seem to get pushed aside or watered down which saddens him as a community member. He related a story of his first-grade daughter being able to walk out on the soccer field with a high school member under the lights. Mr. Eddinger asked if it is really so much money that that can't happen all the time. He hopes that the board will march toward that goal. He felt that it would inspiring to complete the facility to see what it unlocks for the community.

Carl Stoup, from Durham, does not want to diminish sports in any way, but looks at the practicality, reality and cost of it. He felt that the slab could be protected by applying a sealer. This would add a fixed cost to the budget. Mr. Stoup reminded everyone that the cost per pupil in the district is one of the highest in the state and this would add to that. He did not disagree that it would be nice to have it, but everyone needs to look at the reality of it.

Mrs. Petrella asked for a moment to remember everyone who has lost their lives to COVID, to their families, relatives and friends who are dealing with the loss and everyone who is now battling COVID.

Adjournment

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.

In favor of adjourning the special meeting of the Board of Education: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First