

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, May 11, 2022 at 7:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board members present: Ms. Adams, Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello (arrived late), Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback

Board members absent: Mrs. Caramanello, Mr. Mennone and Mr. Stone

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

Mrs. Petrella called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Mrs. Petrella asked to move Committee reports to item 8, with Superintendent's report to follow at item 9. Dr. Schuch added that he told the Coginchaug reporters not to come tonight, so item 4 can be eliminated.

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

In favor of approving the agenda, as amended: Ms. Adams, Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

Recognition of MSSA Award recipients – Elliana Castiglia and Mekhi Watson

Dr. Schuch recognized that Elliana Castiglia and Mekhi Watson were recently honored with the Superintendent's Leadership Award through the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS). They attended a very nice luncheon event as well.

Dr. Schuch introduced Elliana Castiglia, a remarkable young woman of utmost character. She is determined, conscientious, passionate and caring. She has taken a vigorous course load and is a member of the National Honor Society and Spanish Honor Society and is a recipient of a Yale Book Award. She is a member of the Chamber Choir, Show Choir and Concert Band and has participated in the school musicals. She has studied tap, jazz, lyrical and ballet. Elli will pursue musical theater in college. She is also a member of Model UN and EDGE and is dedicated to educating students about the dangers of substance abuse and vaping. Elli explained that she will be going to UCONN and has changed her major to biology.

Dr. Schuch then recognized Mekhi Watson, who is a strong academic performer with impeccable character and commitment to raising awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion. Mekhi has been involved in soccer, basketball, Best Buds, Unified sports, student council, National Honor Society and Spanish Honor Society. He is dedicated to the special needs population and has participated in the district, but also at the state and national level. He has been a CARE ambassador, CIAC youth ambassador, Special Olympics youth leadership delegate and a diversity, equity and inclusion

representative for the CIAC. Mekhi was also selected to participate in the USA Special Olympic games in Florida this June.

Recognition of National Honor Society Inductees

Mrs. Petrella reported that the board had a special meeting on the night that the induction was held and they wanted to make sure that the students were recognized. Unfortunately, the majority of the students were unable to attend tonight's meeting. Mrs. Petrella explained that each inductee will receive a personal congratulatory note from the board to recognize their accomplishments.

Mrs. Dahlheimer read the names of the inductees into the record: Tyler Fusco, Jack Huscher, Leah Wagner, Sam Whittle, Dalton Bates, Jenna DePonte, Charlotte Dunleavy, Katherine Farr, Serena Fournier, Hayden Gonzales, Kiyah Kulpik, Alexandra Nick, Hannah Nielsen, Jayson Penney, Mia Poturnicki, Adam Schaefer, Chloe Shafir, Allison Strang, Julia Talbert-Slagle, Catherine Taylor, Conor Ullman, Christine Waterman and Hope Wondolowski.

Public Comment - at the beginning of the meeting public comment should refer to items on the agenda

Josh Eddinger, from Durham, listened to the meeting last night and wanted to talk about goal-setting and how to engage stakeholders. He sees the budget as a set of priorities and if money is not applied to a priority, then it's not really a priority. He also feels it is important to make incremental improvements to the schools every year. If the goal is to keep the status quo, the district is losing because the world is moving forward. Mr. Eddinger hopes that the board keeps these things in mind as they look to cut the budget. As far as engagement, he doesn't believe he is the only one who thinks there's value in extracurriculars, particularly the field house. He stated that he did support the prior budget and felt that the goals were to plan for Reimagining Education and to set aside a modest amount of money for the athletic program. He is not sure what those goals will be after tonight, but he hopes that it won't be to keep things the same. Mr. Eddinger added that stakeholders are not just the most vocal voters, but are the students and the parents of those students who didn't come to vote. He was embarrassed by the fact that only 982 votes were cast which is 12 percent of the town and there are 1,440 learners in the district.

Eileen Buckheit read a letter from Mike and Lori Fusco, a parent who is at the Jazz Band concert. Mr. and Mrs. Fusco felt that the repair work on Pickett Lane should be bonded. They also felt that if the public was in favor of the field house, it should be fully funded and bonded. They have heard from many students that the SRO is unnecessary, especially now that Durham will have a full-time evening trooper on duty. They suggested conducting a survey of high school staff and students. The Fuscos added that instructional coaches, especially at the middle school level, should be reconsidered and perhaps a survey can look into duplicative positions. The position of the K-12 STEM coordinator should also be considered as a cut and they believe that this position offers little to nothing at the high school level.

Mariah Roy, from Durham, echoed what Mr. Eddinger stated. She felt that only certain people attend meetings because the district does not engage the community enough. She did not feel that the field house should be prioritized over staff and if the community wants the field house, it should be bonded. Mrs. Roy also felt it would be in the community's best interest if there were line items associated with equity, diversity and inclusion. She felt that the district needs to be proactive and that there should be an ongoing agenda item for every Board of Education meeting where either the Well-Being Committee or

the Durham-Middlefield Racial Justice Team informs the board of how many instances of racism or bullying have gone on in the schools since the last meeting, with a goal of having no incidents reported. Mrs. Roy then read a flyer that is circulating around Durham from the New England Nationalist Social Club, a pro-white, street-oriented fraternity dedicated to raising authentic resistance to the enemies of their people in the New England area.

Carl Stoup, from Durham, reiterated that he is adamantly against the field house, especially in a budget that is considered to be in excess. He feels that the field house is a big want and luxury item. Mr. Stoup thanked the board for their due diligence in trying work with the budget. He felt that they all need to live within their means and the economy is not looking great.

Discuss and vote on revisions to the District's 2022-2023 fiscal year budget

Dr. Schuch reviewed that, at last night's meeting, the board discussed a reducing the budget to a 2.5 percent increase over last year. There are three major changes being proposed. Dr. Schuch added that Mrs. Neubig is present tonight as are the principals and assistant principal to answer any questions.

The three items are the updates to health insurance and fuel, the field house and staff reductions. Dr. Schuch reviewed that fuel has increased roughly \$22,000 and the insurance rates came in at a 10 percent increase after having originally being projected at 8 percent. With the proposed staff reductions, the health care benefits are being proposed at \$150,000. Dr. Schuch felt that the district should stay committed to the field house project, but may be better served by taking the \$180,000 and moving it into the Capital Reserve account. This would provide flexibility in when the money actually gets spent while maintaining a commitment to the project.

Dr. Schuch reviewed his experience as a superintendent in Virginia and noted that the district added 600 to 1,000 learners per year and teachers were added. Prior to that, the district he was in had declining enrollment and they decreased the number of teachers. Neither of those districts had metrics as to how many staff members should be hired or reduced. In his last district where there was declining enrollment, they reached the point where the community was telling them that they needed to address it and they worked to develop metrics.

Going back to the original budget proposal in February, Dr. Schuch had noted that they planned to develop those metrics for the following budget cycle and they still do. However, they have not had time to do that yet.

Dr. Schuch explained that the majority of the proposed reductions are at the secondary level because enrollment has been declining more precipitously at that level, but there has been very little reduction of staff. At the elementary level, class size guidelines have been followed. He reviewed that teaching positions, library media positions and other support functions are included in the proposed reductions. Those would include 9.5 of the 10.5 FTEs required to get down to the 2.4 percent. They are also recommending elimination of an elementary science specialist and noted that funds to support field trips and outdoor learning are included in other line items of the budget. Dr. Schuch also explained that, in many cases, class sizes are smaller in middle and high school than in elementary.

These proposed recommendations maintain all programming, but courses with very low enrollment may have to be combined. Dr. Schuch noted that doing reductions at the elementary schools, while

maintaining three schools, is very, very challenging. They tried, but it was just not practical. If the board decides to lower the budget even further, he is prepared to make more recommendations and that will likely cut into the elementary level. Dr. Schuch reiterated that the obvious move would be to go from three elementary schools to two, leading to efficiencies and staff reductions taking care of themselves.

Dr. Schuch then reviewed the individual positions being proposed to be eliminated at the high school which include 3.5 teaching positions from English, math, technology and world languages. Again, no reduction of programs or offerings are proposed. They are also recommending eliminating a security position (not the SRO) which they feel is adequate to provide the security for the high school campus. They are also recommending decreasing the library media specialist position by .5, both at the high school and middle school. Dr. Schuch reviewed that all learners get Chromebooks and most of them have smart phones which give them access to information.

Switching to the middle school, Dr. Schuch is proposing elimination of three teaching positions in English, language arts, math and science. They are also recommending eliminating two part-time tutors in math and literacy as well as the .5 library media specialist.

Dr. Schuch summarized that the target increase was 2.5 percent and they are now at 2.41 percent. He reviewed that if the proposed reductions are not approved, they will have to adjust the health benefits number as well. Dr. Schuch does feel like the next proposed budget would have to be even lower if this doesn't pass and the cuts would have to be even deeper.

Mrs. Booth asked about NEASC and its requirements for a library media specialist and noted that they had been told that it is an issue. Dr. Schuch stated that he didn't understand how NEASC would have the power to tell a district how to staff their buildings, so he challenged them on that and they immediately backed down. They also said that the trend is going away from a library media specialist. Mrs. Booth also asked what the current security person does at the high school and Dr. Schuch explained that they worked with Mrs. Stone, the new principal at the high school, on this. Mrs. Stone explained that the security position offers help to students who are having challenges in hallways, does his due diligence at lunch and also opens the building in the morning and watches the doors. She felt that the SRO could perform most of those pieces. Dr. Schuch added that he has been in districts with much larger high schools that have SROs and no additional security officers.

Mrs. Booth stated that her understanding was that the biggest decline in enrollment is between eighth and ninth grade and she was concerned about class sizes at Strong School. She added that her daughter's sixth grade classes had at least 20 in them. Mrs. Gonzalez stated that teachers in the core classes teach four classes and one exploration. Instead, they will not have explorations and will teach five in their core area. There are 100 students per grade level which equates to roughly 20 students per class.

Dr. Schuch added that he had recommended a reduction of three teaching positions last year (one at Strong and two at Lyman) and there were basically no comments about that. He does not feel that these proposed cuts are major staff cuts and are more like corrections that probably should have been done in smaller increments over the past several years.

Mrs. Booth also asked about moving the \$180,000 for the field house to Capital Reserve and whether it will still be earmarked for the field house. Mrs. Neubig explained that it would, but it could be reallocated to another project or canceled and returned to the fund balance only by a full board vote. Mrs.

Petrella asked what the total percentage of Capital Reserve would be and Mrs. Neubig explained that it is now at 1.84 percent. Mrs. Booth supports increasing the Capital Reserve, but does not support it being named for the field house. She felt that they need more concrete information. Mrs. Booth also noted that she is on the Building Committee and they have never received the information they were waiting for and have not met in some time.

Mr. Moore asked if the situation for the teachers will be the same at high school as it will be at Strong. Dr. Schuch explained that they are looking at opportunities to combine sections and noted that some specialty electives are supported at very low levels. He admitted that they will need to address that in future years, but it is where the district has been for a long time. Mrs. Stone stated that there should be 100 coming from Strong next year, but that will be somewhere between 80 and 90. That equates to five sections of English and they would not need six or seven sections. They will have classes of 20 in the core classes, but they do not have that now.

Mr. Moore asked if there will be enough math and literacy tutors to deal with the fall-back in math and Dr. Schuch felt like there would be. He also noted that these positions are currently vacant. Dr. Schuch emphasized that they are very sensitive to the fact that these cuts will affect people's livelihoods and if the board approves the reductions, they would like to work with the bargaining units and others to perhaps modify retirement incentives to let people take advantage when they are close to meeting the thresholds. Mrs. Petrella felt that it has been a very long time since the district has offered any retirement incentive. Mr. Moore asked if that could be accomplished without negotiations and Mrs. Neubig stated she would have to check with the attorney. She felt that something might be able to be done through an MOU.

Mr. Roraback asked about the SRO visiting other schools and what the protocol is when that happens. He also noted that kids confide in the SRO and security personnel at his high school. Mrs. Stone stated that communication is never an issue with Trooper Hesseltine and security defaults to the administrators when he is out of the building. She also explained that she, Mrs. Trainer and the teachers all have relationships with the kids and she believes that they feel safe at the high school. Mr. Roraback also asked about the library media specialist and if there will be a pair of adult eyes in the library. Mrs. Stone felt that it would become more of a maker space where the kids would be in the library with teachers. There is a para housed in the library full-time as well. Mr. Roraback added that his prep periods have been cut from one per day to one per week and he wondered if that would work here.

Mrs. Petrella commented that the relationship that students built with law enforcement during the DARE program was phenomenal. Mrs. Stone agreed and added that the kids in the high school know the officer by name.

Mrs. Petrella asked to confirm that when an amount is put in Capital Reserve that it stays there and never goes back to the general fund. Mrs. Neubig explained that it only goes back to the general fund if the project is canceled by the board. Mrs. Petrella asked what happens with the money if a particular project is not started and Mrs. Neubig stated that the money remains in the Capital Reserve until such time the project begins. She explained that that is different from the operating budget where there is only one year to expend the money. Mrs. Neubig also noted that the amount can be added to, if needed, and any money not used can be returned to the fund balance once the project is completed.

Mrs. Petrella asked what was included in the budget for equity-type programming and Mrs. Neubig explained that there is \$5,000 budgeted in the Professional Development line item and \$10,000 for in-

service programming. There is also a Title IV grant for student success in the amount of \$10,000 that the district applies for every year. Mrs. DiMaggio added that there is also close to \$5,000 budgeted for Wellness. Mrs. Petrella summarized that there is \$30,000 available for equity types of programs.

Mrs. Petrella also mentioned goals and priorities and stated that it was difficult to say what will happen with Reimagining Education, especially with not knowing which schools will be available. She felt that utilization of the district's facilities needs to be addressed as soon as possible and felt that that would be an educational expenditure. Dr. Schuch reviewed that the board received a draft of the Strategic Plan in January, but that has not been formally adopted yet. They have continued with that planning and felt that the district does have goals, but they are not really embedded into this budget because they are not far enough along in the planning process. He does hope to ask the board to adopt the framework in June or July. One of the teams is developing strategies to get more people educated on the program. Dr. Schuch also felt that until concrete decisions are made about Lyman, it is hard to make everything else fit. He hoped that they will get back to that soon.

Mrs. Petrella added that three positions that are proposed to be cut are actually vacant positions. Dr. Schuch explained that they intend to hire any teachers that are necessary, but the reductions help make those discussions easier. He felt that two groups will feel these cuts the most, the people that don't have a job any longer and those that need to add to their responsibilities. The rules for who will lose their job are very clearly articulated in the bargaining agreements, however there is no language about moving employees to other locations and/or positions.

Mrs. Dahlheimer was concerned about the climate at Strong School and the relationships that have been formed there. She felt that three teachers will be leaving Strong. Dr. Schuch explained that there are a lot of teachers with seniority at Strong and they may not lose their jobs, but may be asked to go to other campuses. He wasn't sure that they have looked into individual certifications yet. Mrs. Gonzalez noted that several teachers have multiple certifications, with K-6, 4-8 and some 7-12. She didn't feel the cuts would be made at one grade level. Dr. Schuch reiterated that he would not recommend these reductions if he felt it would hurt the programming and it is just a matter of having too many staff members for the children being served.

Mrs. Dahlheimer confirmed that programs will not be eliminated, but explorations will be. Dr. Schuch does not view that as a program. He would like to keep as close to class size policies as possible. Mrs. DiMaggio added that one of the things that really helped with this exercise was looking at the positions and not the people.

Mrs. Dahlheimer also asked about looking at central office staff and coaches and Dr. Schuch stated that the team did look at that, but they felt that coaches would have more of an impact at the elementary level. In terms of central office, Dr. Schuch didn't see anywhere that they could reduce and not detrimentally affect the support that they provide. He recognized that people may feel it would be more appropriate to reduce central office staff because they do not work directly with the learners. He also noted that the district has most of the challenges that a larger district has and needs the staff to handle that. Mrs. Neubig reviewed that they did reduce the central office staff by one person two years ago. Dr. Schuch also mentioned that the IT department is probably understaffed at this time, but he has also told the staff that there would be no increases in this budget cycle.

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that they have added coaches over the past few years as they have found a real need to support teachers. Scores are going up, due to the hard work of both the teachers and the instructional coaches. In addition, there is some heavy lifting coming up next year with revamping the structural literacy piece. She felt it would be premature to cut any coaching positions right now. Dr. Schuch added that the work of the science specialist at the elementary level will now fall on the coaches.

Ms. Adams felt that the toughest part of this conversation is that it's happening now rather than a lot earlier in the process. She completely agreed about the coaches and central office staff and added that you can never have enough IT staff. She recognized that a 10.5 FTE decrease is a big lift and just wished that it could have been talked about earlier.

Mr. Moore asked about the Memorial principal vacancy and asked if they had thought about only filling that from inside the district. Dr. Schuch stated that applications are coming in for that, but he wasn't sure if anyone internal has applied. He also acknowledged that it may not necessarily mean that their current position wouldn't need to be filled as well. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if Mr. FitzGerald would be able to move from Strong to Memorial and it was explained that he is a not certified administrator. Dr. Schuch hoped it could be an internal candidate, but noted that they would want the best person.

Mr. Moore asked if they considered sharing any arts, music and physical education positions and Dr. Schuch stated that that had been extensively discussed. Dr. Schuch believes that that will probably have to be done in the next one to two budget cycles if a school isn't closed. One of the challenges right now is that the three elementary schools are not on the same schedule and consolidating them would be a transportation issue which would cost more for bus routes than savings on teachers. Another factor is that they do not want to diminish the district's support for the arts, music or physical activity in any way. He also mentioned that those teachers are doing a lot more than teaching their individual classes. Dr. Schuch also noted that dedicated planning time is a requirement of the bargaining agreements, including at the elementary level. The related arts rotations provide that planning time for the teachers.

Mrs. Booth added that she felt that the related arts teachers have saved the district over the last two years with the sub shortage. Dr. Schuch agreed and stated that they have pulled teachers from their non-related arts duties so the kids don't miss their regular classes. Mrs. Booth added that schools are families and the teachers are important to the children.

Mr. Moore asked about the clerical staff at all of the elementary schools and Dr. Schuch stated that they looked at that and there were some opportunities to reduce contract lengths in there, but he felt that the savings would be minimal vs. the disruption. He also felt that sharing principals and office staff at the elementary level becomes very problematic. From his perspective, Dr. Schuch felt that the elementary staff does not see fairness or equity between their support and what happens at the secondary level.

Mr. Moore has also been asked if there would be a significant savings in busing if Lyman became a neighborhood school just for Middlefield students. Mrs. Neubig did that sort of study a few years ago and there would be a savings of only one or two buses which wouldn't be a lot. Mr. Moore added that he has supported the field house project because he goes to a lot of events there and he doesn't see the facility related only to football. Soccer and track use the field and all of those other uses, including graduation and other events, exceed football. He does support it being put into Capital Reserve and possibly naming it athletic facilities which would allow it to be further analyzed. Mr. Moore stressed that it needs to be made into a more useful facility for the athletes and guests as well. He would like to see a

final decision made and if it's not going to happen, they need to find a way to get a water fountain and better portalets out there.

Ms. Adams commented that the district has a nicer field than when she played on it, but it's still a long run in cleats to the bathroom. Mrs. Booth felt that there were plenty of other schools bigger than ours that don't have them either. She was not trying to say it's not important, but she has a hard time cutting staff and not the field house project. Ms. Adams agreed that they need to do something. Mrs. Booth added that they are no closer than they were three years ago.

Mrs. Caramanello stated that she would have wanted the budget to pass without any cuts, but they are now in this position. She believes the cuts are very responsible and has faith in the administration that programs will not be affected. Regarding the athletic facility, she too is tired of talking about this issue and felt that the district needs to follow through. She thought it was responsible to move it into Capital Reserve, but does not want to remove it or continue the discussion of having it or not.

Ms. Betty felt that the proposed reductions are responsible and putting the field house into Capital Reserve makes the most sense. She also mentioned that they will need to look into ADA accessibility with any proposed bathrooms.

Mrs. Dahlheimer found it very interesting that the project had already been approved by the voters though it has been changed by referendum. The only reason it didn't get finished originally was because of money that was spent on a lawsuit. She read from a news article from 2009 that said that the project was no different than what was brought before the voters and items were addressed in the public hearings. The attorneys' fees were already in the tens of thousands and took away from the additional items that may have come in time. Tennis coach Karen Kean felt sorry for her players who were affected simply because the lights and sounds at the track were considered problematic and were part of the package. She knew then that it would all work out, but take much too long. The kids would be the ones to lose. Mrs. Dahlheimer reiterated that this article was from 2009 and they are still talking about it. She felt it was respectful to put it in the Capital Reserves, but she firmly supports building a responsible structure on the slab.

Mr. Roraback remembered that five years ago, people in Middlefield were all for getting it done and now those same people are against it. He is concerned about losing students going into high school and felt that the track and field facility is a good morale builder. If they don't stop that bleeding, the cost per pupil will continue to go up. Mr. Roraback has also heard there are some very low-maintenance buildings and he would not want this to become a burden on the district's maintenance staff.

Mrs. Petrella liked the term "athletic facility" and agreed that it needs to be vetted. She reviewed that the Building Committee was given the charge to upgrade the building and provide feedback, but that has not happened. She finds it frustrating that they haven't received that information and understands why people want to know the details.

Ms. Betty asked what the impact would be on each town with this new revised budget and Mrs. Neubig explained that Durham will receive a reduction of \$369,737 and Middlefield's reduction will be \$203,232 from the original budget. Mrs. Neubig summarized that the increase to Middlefield will now be \$1,086,338, but \$816,000 of that is because of the enrollment shift, not new spending, leaving an increase in budget spending of \$270,000 over the enrollment. Durham will actually see a savings of \$181,326.

Mrs. Neubig added that there has been an attempt to use a five year average for regional school districts, but that has never been finalized.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Betty, to approve the revised 2022-2023 fiscal year budget in the amount of \$37,915,970, which represents a 2.41 percent increase from the 2021-2022 budget and moving athletic upgrades to Capital Reserve.

In favor of approving the revised 2022-2023 fiscal year budget in the amount of \$37,915,970, which represents a 2.41 percent increase from the 2021-2022 budget and moving athletic upgrades to Capital Reserve: Ms. Adams, Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback voted in the affirmative; Mrs. Booth voted in the negative. Motion carried.

Schedule a District Meeting to present the District's revised 2022-2023 fiscal budget and to approve the warning of the District Meeting and Referendum Vote

Mrs. Dahlheimer read the Warning of District Meeting and Referendum Vote into the record.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Adams, to send the budget to District meeting on May 23, 2022, followed by a referendum on May 24, 2022 with the 2022-2023 Regional School District gross education budget of \$37,915,970.

In favor of sending the budget to District meeting on May 23, 2022, followed by a referendum on May 24, 2022 with the 2022-2023 Regional School District gross education budget of \$37,915,970: Ms. Adams, Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

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

Committee Reports

A. Policy Committee Meeting - May 11, 2022

1. Possible vote on DEI definitions, procurement, amendment to advertising policy and update to immunization policy

Mr. Moore reported that several policies were discussed at their meeting earlier tonight. The advertising policy includes the signs that the Benchwarmers are putting up and the original policy had not included the ability to use that money for scholarships. The Benchwarmers have asked that some of it be used for scholarships and the Policy Committee recommended that change be made. Mrs. Neubig stated that two words would be added to the policy and would then read "programming and scholarships." Mr. Moore felt that it was a minor change and did not require two reads.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Adams, to add scholarships to the Advertising, Promotion and Commercial Activities policy.

Mrs. Dahlheimer added that this would give the Benchwarmers the ability to use the funds for scholarships when there weren't other needs and no cap on that would be necessary.

In favor of adding scholarships to the Advertising, Promotion and Commercial Activities policy: Ms. Adams, Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

Mr. Moore reported that the committee then reviewed the Regional District 13 Properties policy and fee schedule. The fee schedule seems burdensome in some cases and more use of the facilities might be possible with a revised fee schedule. Mrs. Neubig had prepared a fee schedule that includes custodial activities and energy fees. If the board agrees to these changes, Mrs. Neubig will come back to the next meeting with a list of revised fees.

Mrs. Petrella did not feel a motion was necessary and the item will be put on the agenda for the next meeting. Mr. Moore stated that they will get the revised schedule out to everyone before that meeting.

The Policy Committee also discussed a recommendation for Purchasing Procedures policy which came out of Finance Committee. Mr. Stone had recommended changing the policy which would require quotes for smaller amounts. He had recommended three quotes for \$5,000 or over. The Policy Committee felt that a \$10,000 threshold would be more appropriate. Mr. Moore asked that everyone think about that for the next meeting when Mr. Stone would be available to discuss it. He added that most of the district's purchases are from the state procurement list so it has already going through the vetting process.

Mr. Moore asked Mrs. Schmidt to review the definitions for the Equity policy. Mrs. Schmidt explained that the definitions were put together by the CARE student ambassadors in 6-12 grade. They reviewed the Equity policy and pulled out key words. The students looked at definitions that they thought were the best fit for the district. Mrs. Schmidt felt it was important to define equity, but then get to what it looks like. Three high school students did the bulk of the work and the students reviewed them and have produced this final document. Her hope was to embed these words more like the core ethical values. The Policy Committee voted to bring this forward to the board for a full vote tonight as an amendment to the current Equity policy.

Mrs. Booth asked if this vote could be held off until the next meeting as she hasn't had a chance to read this yet. She wouldn't feel comfortable voting, but would abstain. The rest of the board generally felt it would be okay to vote tonight. Mrs. Caramanello didn't understand what the rush is to vote on this, but would be willing to vote tonight. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the kids have been working on this for some time now and it doesn't change the policy at all, but just adds definitions. Mr. Moore added that the Well-Being Committee already reviewed it and supported it as well. Mrs. Petrella felt that the definitions were very well-written.

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to add the proposed definitions to the Equity policy.

In favor of adding the proposed definitions to the Equity policy: Ms. Adams, Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried, with Mrs. Booth abstaining.

Mr. Moore also reported that state statutes have changed regarding immunization. Shipman and Goodwin have proposed a revised Immunization policy. Mrs. Keane explained that the policy is very similar to the current policy, but has been updated to take state regulations into account and takes out the option for

religious exemption. Mr. Moore asked that this policy be put on the agenda for the May 25th meeting as well.

Mrs. Dahlheimer added that the sad thing about the state requirement is that we do have students in the district that have had the religious exemption, but their siblings will not be able to have that.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Schuch congratulated Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Roy and Mrs. Darcy on their elections to the board.

Dr. Schuch added that the Policy Committee meeting that was scheduled for next Wednesday has been canceled. He also suggested canceling the Utilization Committee meeting, but everyone would like to have that meeting happen.

At the most recent board meeting, Mrs. Petrella had asked that Dr. Schuch give an outline of the work that is being done in the equity space. He offered to have Mrs. DiMaggio give a summary tonight or wait until the next meeting. Dr. Schuch added that a number of people have asked Mr. Pietrasko to look into hybrid meetings and Zoom rooms and he can offer a summary on that tonight as well.

Mrs. Booth was concerned about pushing issues off to the next meeting as it will be another late night. She feels it is important because people have been asking about these issues.

Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that, back in 2018, the district developed an equity team comprised of board members, town managers, administrators and some teachers. They had SERC provide Courageous Conversations training at the high school and had a partnership with Middletown where high school students had a book discussion group. Dwight Sharpe had been the equity coordinator in Middletown at the time. COVID hit and the work was stalled.

They have now developed a relationship with SERC again and continued the Courageous Conversations training at the middle school. The ELA department, Social Studies department and Related Arts department at the high school had additional training. They also sent select personnel to SERC's Equity Summit on May 6. CAS also had an equity conference with the State Department of Education and select administrators attended that.

Through consultation with SERC, Calvin Terrell came into the district. SERC is coming back to work with middle school and high school staff, having conversations with the Social Studies department in particular, and also working in team meetings at the middle school. They are also working with about 30 CARE students after school and will also work with administrators. Cheryl Sharpe and Jody Walker-Smith, attorneys with the Commission of Human Rights, have also been invited to come in and provide administrative staff with professional learning in the area of equity. They were excellent and were at no cost.

The district is also in the process of working with ACES who are doing a curriculum equity audit for the Social Studies department, K-8. They will make revisions to the curriculum accordingly and then move to the high school next year. The Social Studies department at the middle school is very interested in

continuing work on equity and are holding a book discussion group amongst themselves using the book, *Cultivating Genius, an Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*.

Dr. Schuch and Mrs. DiMaggio have met with a number of consultants and Linda Darcy was someone they spoke with, but she will now be on the board so they can't hire her. Moving forward, they will have more conversations with SERC and develop a plan with the administrators. They are considering additional curriculum audits, additional training for administrators, training elementary staff and teachers in *Courageous Conversations* and more continued training for middle and high school administrators and staff.

Mr. Moore stated that it came out in the Well-Being Committee that students want a safe relationship with some teachers and suggested looking at ways to arrange teacher conversations with students. Mrs. DiMaggio noted that restorative practices training is something that is also going on with Mr. FitzGerald and Mrs. Schaefer both being trainers at the middle schools. Some high school teachers have been trained and one at Memorial. They will look at how to meld the two together to have those relationships and conversations. Mrs. DiMaggio explained that they are trying to develop a culture where people feel safe, accepted, respected and want to be in school.

Mr. Moore also noted that 100 to 150 kids stood outside the building and need a next step that is not teacher-driven. He felt that the district needs to figure out how to get that group of students into a discussion of what is necessary. He felt that lots of things can be done, but the students have to change themselves and how they treat each other. He thought that Mrs. Stone would be a good facilitator to move this to the next step. Mrs. DiMaggio felt that counselors and additional staff need to be trained as well. Mr. Moore wanted to be sure that the kids are part of the discussion, not the end result of it. They need to have a voice and it needs to be heard.

Dr. Schuch noted that Mrs. Stone is also the team member who is leading the Learning Coach Connection team and all of those things need to work together. Ms. Adams thanked them for sharing this information with the board and agreed that it is important for the kids to have a voice. As a board, their job is to make sure that conditions and support are in place for the staff to make this happen. Mrs. Petrella added that the board needs to be kept updated and educated in everything.

Mrs. Petrella asked if Restorative Practices will be expanded and Mrs. DiMaggio stated that that was the plan. Mrs. Petrella received emails suggesting programs that she will forward to Mrs. DiMaggio.

Mr. Pietrasko reported that the Policy Committee asked to try to find a solution to afford a voice to the public and be as close to self-operating as possible by the board. He offered a solution for \$24,000 which would require a dedicated operator. It would involve changing the seating arrangement and replacing almost all of the existing equipment. Another solution would be automated and is close to \$40,000. Neither of the solutions includes licensing, which would be about \$1,000. He suggested that some money be earmarked for maintenance and support contractors as well. Mr. Pietrasko explained that his department is primarily IT and can help with A/V, but would need to rely on vendors to properly troubleshoot. The second solution would involve moving the seating, adding monitors and enhancing public in-person visual access.

Mr. Pietrasko explained that they wouldn't have even been able to do this if the General Assembly had not permanently extended the allowance for hybrid or remote. Ms. Adams stated that the Freedom of

Information Commission is still pushing back, but she believes it is here to stay. Mr. Pietrasko explained that hybrid is the challenge but they can do remote very well. Mrs. Petrella had asked if he could find some lower tech, but he is not done doing that yet. He is looking into expanding the current phone system.

Dr. Schuch added that Mr. Pietrasko looked at any room that could work in any of the schools and also went to the Town Hall in Durham to see their set-up. Dr. Schuch felt that the arrangement at the Town Hall was not set up to facilitate a large in-person gathering concurrent with a hybrid. It works very well for smaller committee meetings with only a handful of public. Dr. Schuch felt that they need to consider what the primary mode will be for conducting meetings. Mr. Pietrasko added that he had also looked at the former lab attached to the library at Strong which would have fit the board on camera, but would have allowed only one row for public.

Mrs. Dahlheimer added that the Town Meeting for the Board of Education elections had everyone on the projectors with an external microphone and a laptop in the back. She noted that there is a huge aging population in both towns and they will not and cannot come to meetings. The board talks about engagement and communication and this would be something that needs to be done. The town did it the other night with a \$100 camera and a \$40 external microphone plugged into a laptop that was plugged into a projector in the auditorium.

Ms. Betty asked if it would be possible to do the same thing and hold their meetings in the auditorium. Mr. Pietrasko explained that that would all be portable technology and conflicts would be a challenge. Dr. Schuch noted that he has been in districts where board meetings were held in auditoriums and they were effective, but they weren't like the meetings are here. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that they may not like it, but voters might.

Mrs. Petrella felt that the main purpose of this research is for people who cannot make the meetings to be able to add their voice. She was not sure if visual is that important. Mrs. Petrella added that a new phone system is being installed and she wasn't sure what capabilities that may have. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that they say they offer a live YouTube, but it is delayed and can be as much as one minute up to 10 minutes. She felt that the elderly get frustrated and then just give up and vote no on the budget because they weren't part of the process.

Dr. Schuch felt that if they were going to do something like this, it needs to be married to things like people signing up in advance and knowing where they are in the queue. Mr. Pietrasko reviewed that they had discussed doing it well right from the start and not piecemealing. Mrs. Dahlheimer did not want to go through another school year without something to make this happen. Mr. Pietrasko also noted that this type of technology should have a dedicated space.

Ms. Betty asked if there would be an option to book a room at the Durham Town Hall, but everyone generally felt it was too small. Mr. Pietrasko felt that it's effectively set up to capture a six-person video, but the board has 12 people at the table. Middlefield has signed a purchase order for a system, but it's not happening anytime soon due to tech delays.

Mr. Moore didn't want to lose the point that board meetings are for the board to manage the school system, with public present and accepting comments but they are not public hearings. Mrs. Dahlheimer

agreed, but they have been asked to engage the community. Ms. Adams agreed with Mr. Moore that they sometimes get diverted from their purpose to hear what the public has to say.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education Work Session - March 23, 2022

Mrs. Petrella proposed a correction to change the word “will” to “with” about high-loss ratios.

Ms. Adams made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to approve the minutes from the Board of Education Work Session held on March 23, 2022, as amended.

In favor of approving the minutes from the Board of Education Work Session held on March 23, 2022, as amended: Ms. Adams, Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

B. Board of Education Regular Meeting - April 6, 2022

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Betty, to approve the minutes from the Board of Education Regular Meeting held on April 6, 2022, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes from the Board of Education Regular Meeting held on April 6, 2022, as presented: Ms. Adams, Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

C. Board of Education Public Hearing - April 6, 2022

Mrs. Petrella proposed a correction to change the date to April 6, not April 8.

Ms. Adams made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to approve the minutes from the Board of Education Public Hearing held on April 6, 2022, as amended.

In favor of approving the minutes from the Board of Education Public Hearing held on April 6, 2022, as amended: Ms. Adams, Ms. Betty, Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried.

D. Board of Education Special Meeting - April 27, 2022

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Ms. Adams, to approve the minutes from the Board of Education Special Meeting held on April 27, 2022, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes from the Board of Education Special Meeting held on April 27, 2022, as presented: Ms. Adams, Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella and Mr. Roraback. Motion carried, with Mrs. Booth abstaining.

Next Board Meeting - May 25, 2022 at 7:00 PM

Communications

Mrs. Petrella has received 20 emails with comments and concerns about the presentation by Calvin Terrell and have been shared with the entire board. Mrs. Petrella did not respond to any emails, except to the students. Dr. Schuch did respond. Emails were received from Doug Forbush, Cindy Pietrek, Bernadette Basile, Students Against Racism, John Giammatteo, Jessica Babbitt, Carey Sullivan, Laura Faiella, Mike Charron, Nicole Esposito, Michelle Gohagon, Jill Amaio, Brian Olivieri, Francis and Susan McNulty, Becky Finnerty, Rhonda Riggotts-Stevens, Laura Sanperry, Cindy Felicia Kenyon, Nicole Ercolani and Anthony Kearns.

Mrs. Petrella also received more than one email from Nick Faiella regarding the budget and general comments as well as several emails from Donia Viola regarding budget comments, weather and media concerns and staff breaks. She received an email from Joanna Schmidt sharing a program for racial equity called Tool for Racial Equity. Several emails were received from Lori Fusco with comments about Lyman and programming, a Strong School incident and the high school principal as well as lack of communication. Mary Ann O'Brien emailed about the Zoom platform which was referred to the IT department.

Students Against Racism sent an invitation to their walk-out. Carey Sullivan had concerns about high school AstroTurf which was referred to Mrs. Neubig. Rhonda Riggott Stevens' FOIA request was referred to the superintendent. Joanna Schmidt sent an invitation to CARE student ambassador meetings and Mrs. Petrella will forward that to everyone.

Maya Perry Liss sent a thank-you email as well as an email with feedback about the budget. Barbara Infeld had concerns about cigar smoking after graduation which was referred to the superintendent and high school principal. Cindy Felicia Kenyon emailed regarding protecting our schools and Mary B. Johnson provided feedback about the budget.

Mrs. Petrella noted that there were a few emails received today about the budget as well.

Mrs. Dahlheimer received a very lengthy letter supporting the field house from Karen Buckley and an email from Christine Geraci and Maya Perry Liss with concerns about the budget. Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that she will be attending the first ACES governing board meeting tomorrow and asked that she be able to report on that at the May 25th meeting.

Public Comment

Maureen Funke, from Durham, felt that addressing the A/V issue is great and totally hits the open wall concept of Reimagining Education. She also congratulated Mrs. Schmidt, Mrs. DiMaggio and Mrs. Keane for the work they are doing. To the people listening at home or reading the minutes, Mrs. Funke highly suggested coming to Well-Being Committee meetings, to board meetings and to Reimagining Education meetings. She felt that everybody can spare three hours if they actually care about what's happening. Mrs. Funke had sent several emails about the incidents that have occurred and she felt it was very clear that there had been board members that were not aware of what has actually been happening. She feels that that is either grossly obtuse or knowingly ignorant. Mrs. Funke felt that people should be aware of what's happening. She added that they all live in a town where black and brown kids are bullied and attacked for the color of their skin and Nazis feel comfortable to hand out paraphernalia and recruit

young men. She believes that the DEI items should be earlier in the agenda and the discussions need to continue. The handouts that Mrs. Funke got today in Durham and Rockfall are just not okay and these people are Nazis.

Lori Fusco, from Durham, felt that budgets are a determination of values and the proposals approved tonight show that students are not being valued. They have made direct cuts where kids are affected. Central Office staff needs to be cut as it is not in line with other districts. Mrs. Fusco felt that the board is asking the kids to suffer while not making a single cut at the administrative level. The board is making their determinations without any data to back them up. She reiterated that they need to ask the teachers to help guide ways to save money. Retention at the high school and budget go hand in hand. The cuts in staffing will not help the district keep students at the high school level as she feels they are STEM-level programming cuts. Recent high school rankings came out and the district's high school is not ranked well in comparison with area districts. This budget will not help bring that ranking up. Mrs. Fusco is very disappointed with the proposed cuts.

Adjournment

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

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

Meeting was adjourned at 10:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First