

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, April 5, 2023 at 6:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

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

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, Mr. Brough, Human Resources Specialist, Mr. Pietrasko, Director of Infrastructure and Security Technology, Mrs. Quarato, Learner-Centered Specialist and Ms. Siegel, Learner-Centered Specialist

Mrs. Petrella called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

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

Mrs. Roy asked to recognize that it was the first night of Passover and they may be missing some people who cannot be present.

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

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

A. In-person public comment

None.

B. Remote public comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

- A. Board of Education Special Meeting - March 1, 2023**
- B. Board of Education Regular Meeting - March 8, 2023**
- C. Board of Education Special Joint Meeting - March 16, 2023**
- D. Board of Education Regular Meeting - March 22, 2023**
- E. Board of Education Special Meeting - March 27, 2023**

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Dr. Darcy, to table the approval of the above-listed minutes until the next meeting.

In favor of tabling the approval of the above-listed minutes until the next meeting: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Superintendent's Report (if applicable)

Dr. Schuch reported that he attended the Career Day at Strong School last week and it was outstanding. Mrs. Gonzalez and Mrs. Sinusas did a great job and there was great participation from the community. He thanked the Merwin Trust for underwriting the expenses for that. Dr. Schuch also noted that mock interviews were conducted yesterday at the high school and he thanked Mr. Thompson and the administrators for setting it up. He was able to interview four students who hope to go into teaching.

Mrs. Dahlheimer added that Josh Kelly also did an incredible job and Dr. Schuch added that Junior Achievement is a partner of the district. Mr. Moore added that he met with the valedictorian who will be pursuing environmental engineering.

Staff Reports

A. Director of Finance Report - Kim Neubig

Mrs. Neubig reported that the general fund has been 70 percent expended and 76 percent of revenue has been received. MTA has been 46 percent expended, with 45 percent of revenue received.

B. Climate Committee Update - Jen Keane

Mrs. Keane reported that the committee met on March 22nd and reviewed attendance and behavior data. She will include detailed updates at the May 10th board meeting. The reporting form was up and running in January, but they received feedback that it was difficult to find. It was updated and then went live on both Strong and the high school's web pages under Student Resources. A tab will appear on the district's home page under District Climate Resources, where policies will be available as well as the reporting form. Scott Driscoll, from Internet Safety Concepts, gave a presentation to fourth and fifth grade students at Memorial. He also gave the presentation to sixth through eighth grade students at Strong as well as to parents and the community last night. Mrs. Keane felt that the presentation was very appropriate and informative at all levels.

The committee had a great deal of discussion around the mental health crisis for children in the nation. Articles and resources were shared and they will continue to focus on helping the children work through it. All students in the district have been followed by an adult, taking a pulse on the mental health of each and every student using the Aperture app. They have found that the information being gathered is very helpful. Mrs. Keane will share a detailed report at the end of the school year. Mrs. Dahlheimer recognized the efforts of all the staff involved in doing that work and Mrs. Keane was very grateful for their help.

Mrs. Keane also updated the board that they have been partnering with outside clinics to offer counseling at school. They are in the second year with the Root Center at the high school and have partnered with Community Health Center at Strong and Memorial. CHC is now in the district five days a week and it has been a very successful partnership.

Mr. Roraback added that every single staff member is in their position to do their job, but it's also important to just have a presence and make a connection. Mr. Mennone asked if the Aperture program triggers any referrals and Mrs. Keane explained that Aperture would flag social-emotional concerns and they would move through the tiered behavioral system. She added that the outside resources are booked solid as they are throughout the country.

New Business

A. Vote on Teacher Non-Renewals

Mr. Brough reviewed that this process occurs per state statute and requires that all non-tenured teachers who are not going to be renewed need to be notified by May 1st of each year. This is a budgetary process which allows the district to reduce staff, should that become necessary. Mr. Brough spoke with Mr. Bradanini and all building reps have reached out to the individual staff members. A letter has also been given to each of the non-tenured teachers. Dr. Schuch will send a follow-up letter informing them of the motion and the process. Once the budget passes, they can hopefully then send a letter stating that their position has been renewed.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, that the contract for the employment of Alexis Noheimer, Justine Plourde, Mark Sienna, Kate DeMartino, Michael Brady, Isabelle Baranski, Heather Parente, Michelle Neveux, Victoria Abolafia, Hillary Sirois, Toby Rascati, Michelle Seward, Kara Urso, Shawna Johnson, Jeff Landry, Brianna Tasto, Sarah Sportelli, Gloria McClure, Laura Mongillo, Delia Falcon and Cara Kilroy not be renewed for the following school year, upon its expiration at the end of the 2022-2023 school year and that the Superintendent of Schools is directed to advise each of the persons in writing of this action.

In favor of the above motion: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

B. Facilities Code Compliance

Mrs. Neubig explained that she had received questions about ADA accessibility in the district and the feasibility studies had identified areas that were specifically ADA noncompliant. The district can address some of the items through a state school construction code compliance grant that funds projects at our rate of 52%. The district has been reactively making improvements on a case-by-case basis. Mrs. Neubig can provide a list of items, but one could argue that almost anything can be noncompliant. Those items are always top-of-mind and are considered in the capital plan, but to do a complete code upgrade on every school would be equivalent to completing our full capital plan which could be estimated at roughly \$30 million, depending on escalation or projects and eligibility of state code grants. The state does allow reimbursement for code compliance projects at 52 percent but they must be an approved compliance area.

Mr. Moore asked if there were any serious issues and Mrs. Neubig felt that if there was a serious issue, it would take priority. Mrs. Roy asked how they can become proactive rather than reactive and what time frame is needed to provide access. Mrs. Neubig stated that they could do a code compliance project, but funding would be the challenge. Mrs. Roy asked if a list was available and Mrs. Neubig has provided the list of what the architects have identified that has not yet been addressed.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if there was a reason that the last feasibility study was done in 2018 and Mrs. Neubig explained that that was done when they talked about school reconfiguration and one was done at Lyman in 2020.

Committee Reports

A. Building Committee Meeting - March 29, 2023

Mr. Moore reported that the Building committee voted to accept the Memorial School roof improvement project and authorize payment to the contractor. They also spent a lot of time on the proposed Memorial School renovations with Silver Petrucelli. They questioned the size and student enrollment. They also talked about other ways to reduce the costs, but the bottom line was to ask Mrs. Neubig to hire somebody to take a look at future costs over the next 20 years of the current buildings and compare that against the level of debt service and the operating costs of a new building.

Mrs. Neubig explained that she has done the projections and she and Dr. Schuch are meeting with three different companies tomorrow.

Mr. Moore added that the Building committee also talked about the paving on Pickett Lane and they will be meeting with two vendors. The cost appears to be around \$500,000 which will be offset by the savings from the culvert project and what is in the budget.

B. Policy Committee Meeting - March 15, 2023 and April 5, 2023

Mr. Moore reported that the March 15th meeting was basically about the fund-raising issue and they received a lot of input from the public on how various groups would have difficulty under the current policy. They proposed some changes to the policy which have been sent to Shipman and Goodwin. Dr. Schuch thought that they would bring Shipman's thoughts back at the April meeting. He added that he felt that a lot of the policy language meets the concerns that the groups have and it is more interpretation.

The Policy committee also discussed the food policy about food in the classroom and ended up recommending that the principals attend a Policy committee meeting.

In the Policy committee meeting tonight, they recommended that the board adopt a policy to use the district's Facebook page or other social media for district functions and district activities only. They recommended that the attorney suggest the proper language for that.

Communications

Mrs. Petrella explained that almost everything she received had the board members on copy. She did receive an email from Maureen Funke with some questions about Indigenous Peoples Day. She also received an email from Kelly Therrien about a personal concern and from Kerry Sullivan with a question about the budget and re-imagining which she referred to Dr. Schuch.

Adjourn for Public Hearing on the Budget at 7:00 PM

The board adjourned at 6:40 PM for the public hearing on the budget at 7:00 PM.

Resume regular session Board of Education meeting**2023-2024 Budget****A. Discussion on Public Hearing**

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked Mrs. Neubig if the budget reflects the lowest number possible for fuel costs. Mrs. Neubig explained that the slide referred to daily transportation which includes diesel, but doesn't necessarily mean that diesel went up. The district locked in with the same consortium that Durham did at \$3.10/gallon. The increase in the bus number was per the contract that was signed four years ago. Mrs. Neubig added that electricity was decreased by about \$160,000 due to signing with a new supplier.

Mr. Roraback wondered why they were receiving all the comments about not being able to be heard and felt they should make a commitment to make that work. He felt that remote meetings will not go away and they need to figure it out. Mrs. Roy asked if other boards were getting the same complaints and didn't feel it was fair to expect individuals to upgrade their equipment to gain access. Mrs. Dahlheimer reminded everyone that they did it the best way they could at no cost to the taxpayers. Other technology costs were astronomical, but IT is working on it. Mrs. Roy felt that they could communicate what steps are being taken to improve this. Mrs. Petrella offered to put this on the next agenda and noted that she has had a hard time hearing other meetings as well.

Mrs. Petrella noted that they are very appreciative of the feedback from the community and try to be as fiscally responsible as possible.

B. Finalize Budget for District Meeting

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to go to District meeting on May 1, 2023, followed by a referendum on May 2, 2023 with the 2023-2024 Regional School District gross education budget of \$39,426,575.

In favor of going to District meeting on May 1, 2023, followed by a referendum on May 2, 2023 with the 2023-2024 Regional School District gross education budget of \$39,426,575: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mrs. Roy. Mr. Stone was not available for the vote. Motion carried.

The district meeting will be held on May 1, 2023 at 7:00 PM in the Cuginchaug auditorium and the referendum will be held on May 2, 2023 from 6:00 AM until 8:00 PM, with voting at the Durham Community Center and the Middlefield Community Center. The times and dates will be posted on the website and signs will be put up as well. Dr. Schuch has also sent out the information through Parent Square. Mrs. Petrella encouraged everyone to sign up for Parent Square on the district's website. There will also be a mailing sent to each household.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

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

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

Meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
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