

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in special session on Wednesday, March 26, 2024 at 6:00 PM via Zoom.

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

Board members absent: Mr. DeVecchio

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

Mrs. Dahlheimer called the special meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Mennone made a motion, seconded by Dr. Darcy, to approve the agenda, as presented.

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

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

A. Remote public comment

Roger Kleeman, from Durham, stated that the newsletter from the Democrats came out yesterday and found it interesting that they talked about the configuration of the schools. It was the first he had heard that this had been decided. He was disappointed that the public had not had a chance to weigh in and suggested that it be tabled until they reach out to the community and get approval.

Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Facility Planning Design for Operation of Three Schools in Regional School District 13

Mrs. Dahlheimer explained that there had been unanimous consensus at the joint meeting with the Building Committee on option C1A which is the renovate, unoccupied site at Memorial.

Mrs. Neubig noted that option C1A is the renovate-as-new at Memorial and would involve no demolition of the building, rather an adding and renovations. A two-story building is included near the rear of the existing building. Athletic fields and pickle ball courts will remain on-site and there will be increased parking. The rendition on the website is a high-level conceptual design done so that pricing can be figured. It was also done for educational specifications which are documents that the district is required to submit with the grant application. The design presented does not mean it will be the ultimate design as things can still be moved, added and changed.

The estimated total project cost of option C1A is \$76 million. Estimated reimbursement rate from the State of Connecticut is \$37 million. The net construction cost is \$38 million. The 10-year operating cost

estimate is \$28 million and the debt service will increase an average of \$2.4 million over 10 years. The total preK-5 project costs for option C1A would be \$12,427,984.

The district has to make three resolutions in order to apply to the State of Connecticut. They need to be done in a timely manner and in order for the architects to move ahead with the educational specifications. The resolutions are written by the state. The vote could also be that the board is voting to move ahead with option C1A and that these resolutions allow the district to apply for the state grant. The deadline to apply for the grant is June 30th. Adopting these resolutions does not mean that this is the final design and also gives the board more opportunities to have further information sessions, should they decide to, and to listen to feedback before it goes to referendum for funding. The application can always be pulled should something not work out. If the resolutions are not adopted, the district would have to wait another year to apply. Mrs. Neubig explained that if the grant is approved, it would take another year before construction can start. If the grant application is submitted, it is likely that they will not know if they have been approved until at least December or January and then can't start any construction until July 1, 2025.

Mrs. Neubig added that this does not bind the district to anything, however they will not be able to change their mind on the chose project design once the application has been submitted. Ms. Betty asked for clarification and Mrs. Neubig explained that the resolutions do not bind them to option C1A, however once the application has been submitted, they will be bound to that project option. The project can always be pulled, but we will not be able to change to another option, such as a new building without another grant application the following year. She added that the board can change the chosen design at any point before submitting the application and not have to adopt new resolutions. Dr. Schuch clarified that Mrs. Neubig does not mean that the building would be exactly as presented, but the square footage and the cost would be locked in as well as the fact that it is a renovation, not new construction, and will be done unoccupied.

Mrs. Dahlheimer reiterated that the application could be pulled at any time before construction begins. Mrs. Neubig agreed, but reminded everyone that that will carry a risk of being a year or two behind.

Mr. Moore stated that option C1A is identified on the website with a diagram for people to review, dated March 20, 2024. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that this will require a plan amendment to close Brewster School, but not John Lyman School as there would still be an elementary school in that town. She added that there is a possibility that the budget will not be negatively impacted by this project.

Mrs. Dahlheimer wanted to be sure everyone understood that this grant application is not saying the board is overriding anyone. It is saying that the Building Committee and the board came to a unanimous consensus that this plan is the best for Regional District 13. If they wait another year, they could see major escalation costs. The referendum can hopefully be held in June, but they can also wait until November.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to approve option C1A as the facility planning design for the operation of three schools in Regional School District 13.

Ms. Betty felt that they need to reach out to the public about potential usage or selling the buildings prior to a referendum. Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that both towns have to agree to a plan amendment to close Brewster at that point. Ms. Betty also felt it is important to discuss what happens if it doesn't pass. Mr. Mennone felt that not doing this puts the five schools, infrastructure-wise, at great risk with no funds

available to address major issues. This plan is the most logical and most necessary to have fiscal and infrastructure stability moving forward. He believed that they will find themselves with no capital funds to help keep the other schools the way they should be. The board has done extensive research, asked the community for input and are looking at long-term cost savings. Mrs. Neubig added that the district does not have an option to not do anything. A bonding referendum would probably be necessary to borrow the funds to make improvements to the schools as many things are at end-of-life. If bonding is not done and the improvements are put into the yearly budget instead, the increase could likely be double digits. The renovation of Memorial would remove all the capital needs of Brewster, Lyman and Memorial and would free up funds in capital for other projects. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that keeping five schools open will drastically affect programming and staffing eventually.

In favor of approving option CIA as the facility planning design for the operation of three schools in Regional School District 13: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

School Construction Project

- A. RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of Regional School District 13 authorizes the Superintendent, on behalf of the Regional School District 13 Board of Education, to apply to the Commissioner of Administrative Services and to accept or reject a grant for the Renovation/Expansion of Memorial School.
- B. RESOLVED, that the standing Regional School District 13 Building Committee is hereby established as the Building Committee with regard to the Renovation/Expansion of Memorial School.
- C. RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Regional School District 13 hereby authorizes at least the preparation of schematic drawings and outline specifications for the Renovation/Expansion of Memorial School.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella: (A) RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of Regional School District 13 authorizes the Superintendent, on behalf of the Regional School District 13 Board of Education, to apply to the Commissioner of Administrative Services and to accept or reject a grant for the Renovation/Expansion of Memorial School.

In favor of Resolution A: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella: (B) RESOLVED, that the standing Regional School District 13 Building Committee is hereby established as the Building Committee with regard to the Renovation/Expansion of Memorial School.

Mrs. Neubig explained that a Building Committee is required in order to do a state project. Mr. Moore added that the Building Committee has to have members other than board members as well. They will review the plans and specs and construction activities.

In favor of Resolution B: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore: (C) RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Regional School District 13 hereby authorizes at least the preparation of schematic drawings and outline specifications for the Renovation/Expansion of Memorial School.

Mrs. Neubig explained that this is in order for QA+M to move forward with the educational specs.

In favor of Resolution C: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Adjournment

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stone, 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 and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:39 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First