

The Regional District 13 Board of Education held a District Meeting on Monday, May 5, 2008 at 8:00 p.m. in the Julian Thayer Auditorium at Coginchaug Regional High School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currin, Mrs. Flanagan, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hennick, Mr. Hicks, Ms. Parsons, Dr. Ochterski, Dr. Shoemaker. Members absent: Ms. Gara. Also present: Mrs. Viccaro, Mr. Melnik.

Mr. Hennick called the meeting to order at 8:04p.m. and led everyone in the pledge of allegiance.

Mr. Hicks read the call of the meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to elect Jim Finley as moderator. No other nominations were made. Jim Finley was unanimously elected as moderator.

Mr. Melnik said in response to a question asked at the public hearing these are the five most expensive items in the budget: basketball - \$58,681, indoor and outdoor track - \$48,187, baseball and softball - \$42,015, soccer - \$41,263, football - \$22,511.

The meeting was opened to questions and comments.

Fred Wunsch said he would like to know how many students participate in the football program. He said the money should be spent instead on the sports that have more students involved or he would like to see the money spent on sports used for the academic program instead. He asked what is the football program with Vinal? Mr. Melnik said both schools have a co-op program because there are not enough students at either school to support its own program. Each year in District 13 more students are getting involved in football and the program keeps growing.

Bill Smith asked what the 18% administrative cost for the facilities projects includes. Mr. Melnik stated this is for the bond counsel, architect and engineering costs.

Mr. Finley stated the District Meeting was to discuss the education budget. Mr. Parmelee said as a point of order there is money in the budget that is for the facilities project. Mr. Finley said then the questions and comments can continue on the facilities project.

Dave Montgomery questioned the use of a synthetic field versus grass. He said information on the project states that the synthetic field would get 3 times the number of uses a grass field would get. He also said the calculation was wrong in stating the synthetic field was more cost effective; correctly figured the grass field would be more cost effective.

Mr. Melnik stated the synthetic field would be available to be used more by having practices and a game all on the same field. The field would not need to be rested in between events and could have continuous use. The synthetic field can also be used in all types of weather. Mr. Melnik will check into the flaw in the calculation Mr. Montgomery mentioned.

Dave Montgomery questioned if the field inside the track can have continuous use why is the field at Strong School included in the project. Mrs. Viccaro stated because of the large number of practices in all sports having an additional field is very helpful.

Rick Parmelee thanked the Board for bringing the budget to referendum and for getting the information on the five most expensive programs in the budget. He feels the people need to know how much football would cost if not with Vinal seeing that the program is growing and

the District may need to have its own team. He is glad to see capital funds are included in the budget. He thinks the legislature needs to work on having more oversight on a regional district budget, and he still thinks having an activity fee for students is wrong.

Mr. Parmelee said the meeting on the building project was very informative but thought the Board of Education should have held another meeting after people had time to read the information regarding the project so they could ask questions. He said many people feel the bonding question should have been divided into two questions.

Dan Lehet said everyone is talking about money and no one is mentioning the health of the students. There is a serious concern with children suffering from illnesses from synthetic turf. Senator Meyers is conducting a study to see how artificial turf affects children's health and he feels the District should wait to see the results of the survey.

Mr. Melnik said the Department of Health is approving the use of synthetic turf but is still doing more research. The District will continue to review this before any decision is made.

A resident said the Public Health Department also approved lead paint at one time. He said the District should make sure synthetic turf is healthy before it is installed.

John Manley said the chemicals put on grass are also not completely safe. He said there is a 30-40% decrease in injuries on synthetic turf.

Rick Handley said good arguments can be said for both types of fields. Real proof needs to be given. The track is in awful condition and really needs to be redone. He would like to know the time frame that the fields will be done if approved. Mr. Melnik said hopefully by next spring.

Chris Flanagan wanted to know if it was possible to have two questions for one bond issue and if approved how is the decision made to use synthetic turf or grass. Mrs. Viccaro stated the Building Committee makes the decision. Mr. Currilin stated all Building Committee meetings are open to the public. The engineers looked at both types of fields and gave their best recommendation. All synthetic fields are not the same.

Teresa Opalacz questioned the decline in regular education of \$900,000 that is listed in the budget. Mr. Melnik stated some items have been recategorized; there is not a \$900,000 decline in the regular education budget.

Fred Wunsch asked if the arbitration decision for the teacher is included in the budget and what is the increase. Mr. Melnik stated the teachers received an arbitrated decision of a 3.82% increase and that increase is included in the budget.

Fred Wunsch asked how the decision is made for the increase in salary and why the people don't have a say in the increase. Mrs. Flanagan said the Personnel Policies Committee tries to negotiate for the fairest salary. The arbitration panel looks at the settlements in the State and at comparative towns and then makes a decision. The teachers are paying a higher co-pay for their insurance coverage.

Mr. Wunsch said taxes need to be looked at because many people are moving out of town because they can not afford to live here.

Mr. Parmelee said he felt the teachers' contract should have been called so the people had a chance to vote.

Chris Flanagan asked why there weren't multiple questions to the bond issue. Mrs. Viccaro stated it was the Board of Education's decision to bring one question forward. Mr. Hennick stated the project is capital improvements and the Board felt it did not need to be separated.

Dave Montgomery doesn't feel the Building Committee should have all the say in the scope of the athletic complex and on what materials should be used. Mrs. Adams stated the Building Committee is appointed to get all the information and then give recommendations to the Board of Education for approval.

Margaret Neri does not agree with the magnitude of the complex. She wanted to know why the track cannot be repaired instead. Mr. Currlin stated the tennis courts as well as the fields needed to be worked on. The track has been repaired over the years and it is time for it to be completely redone.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn to the referendum on the education budget on May 6, 2008 from 6:00am – 8:00pm. The motion was unanimously passed.

RECV'D: Office of the Town Clerk
December 18, 2008 at 2:25pm