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BOARD OF EDUCATION REGIONAL DISTRICT 13 APRIL 8, 2015

The Regional District 13 Board of Education held a public hearing on Wednesday, April 8, 2015 in the auditorium at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, CT. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Boyle (8:10 p.m.), Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Fulton, Mr. Hicks, Dr. Onofreo, and Mr. Renninghoff.
Members absent: Mrs. Buckheit, Mrs. Fronc
Also present: Dr. Veronesi, Mr. Melnik

Mrs. Flanagan called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Hicks read the Call of the Meeting and the Return of the Call.

Dr. Veronesi welcomed the community and introduced the Board of Education. Dr. Veronesi stated that she and Mr. Melnik had worked with the District's administrative team to present to the Board a budget that pursued District goals and collaborative accountability. Dr. Veronesi affirmed that next year will be a time for the District to sustain, strengthen and prepare. The additions in the Budget are to strengthen the infrastructure of the district by supporting safety, wellness, technology, and utilization efforts. Dr. Veronesi thanked the Board and her administrative team.

Mr. Fulton presented the budget overview for the past three years noting the change in percent has been under 2%. Mr. Fulton also stated that receipts show a decrease due to state funding. Mr. Fulton then presented the town assessments. Mr. Fulton stated that the student enrollment figures are based on the number of students in our District on October 1, 2014. Mr. Fulton spoke of the declining enrollment and also mentioned that the ECS Grant number is estimated as it is decided by the legislature in June. Mr. Fulton reviewed the components of the budget stating that a large portion of the budget is allocated to people.

Mrs. Flanagan reviewed staffing for certified and non-certified staff and how the Board is addressing declining enrollment. Mrs. Flanagan also presented the per pupil cost. She stated that the Board is committed to managing expenditures appropriately. Mrs. Flanagan stated that as state funding continues to decline, mandates continue to keep rolling in.

Mrs. Flanagan reviewed the salaries account showing the impact of collective bargaining agreements, the impact of 2.3 new positions, along with the impact of reductions and retirements. She also reviewed the benefits account showing a 7.0% increase in the cost of health insurance, a decrease in unemployment, an increase of 50.0% in workers' compensation, and savings due to moving from a traditional PPO plan to a HDHP plan with some bargaining units.

Dr. Onofreo reviewed purchased services stating that there is an increase of $35,000 for wellness and safety resources and an increase of $65,000 for engineering and architectural services relating to the Utilization Study. There is a decrease of $20,000 for legal expenses. Addressing the property services Dr. Onofreo stated there is a decrease of $7,000 as a result of

competitive bid process, decrease in copier leases, and a decrease of $7,000 in potential roof repairs at Brewster School in anticipation of a new roof. Dr. Onofreo stated that under operating services there is an increase of $119,880 in tuition for the magnet school, outplacements and other tuitions. There is also an increase of $9,520 in property, auto and general liability insurance and a decrease in diesel fuel of $53,475.

Dr. Onofreo stated there is a continued focus on reduction of energy costs by the use of solar and efficient lighting. The District has locked into an electricity rate along with locking into a rate for heating fuel. Dr. Onofreo addressed capital stating that non-essential individual school capital projects will not be completed until decisions are made by the utilization study. Lastly Dr. Onofreo addressed the debt service and presented a slide showing a downward trend even with the proposed Brewster School roof.

Mrs. Flanagan stated that the most important aspects of the budget have been presented and asked the public for comments and questions.

Chuck Stengel of Durham asked if the Board had gone out to bid for health insurance and suggested the Board look into joining other towns to get more leverage on rates. Mr. Stengel also commented the on slide 13 in the presentation showing a 2.9% decrease in the number of teachers and a 3.9% decrease in enrollment.

Oanh Stephan of Durham referred to slide 18 and questioned the size of the Kindergarten classes at Brewster School. She stated that she had a concern with 18 students in a Kindergarten class and asked if there would be a full time assistant in the classroom. Dr. Veronesi stated it would be looked at. Mrs. Stephan also asked if students new to the District entering Kindergarten would have to go to Lyman School therefore removing the choice of a program. Dr. Veronesi said new Kindergarten students would have to go to Lyman School.

Mark Longo of Durham asked about the 26.93% decrease in Special Education Excess Cost. Dr. Veronesi stated that decrease would not change any services or support a student was getting.

Jim Irish of Middlefield thanked the BOE for the summary. He made reference to non-staff related costs. He stated the graphs on Debt Service show a reduction of debt however was concerned about what may come out of the utilization study.

Roger Kleeman stated that the increase in Workers' Compensation was not addressed. Mr. Melnik stated that we are looking at a 50% increase do to major claims we have had. Mr. Kleeman is concerned about the Board selling Korn School to the Town of Durham as he feels it will result in the taxes in Durham going up. Mrs. Flanagan stated it is a complex issue to close a building and that both the Town of Durham and the Town of Middlefield would be affected.

Richard Parmelee of Durham thanked the Board for going to referendum. He commented on the State of Connecticut not being a business friendly state. He is concerned that our budget is constantly going up. He is against fees being assessed to students as we have an obligation to educate our students.

Carl Stoup of Durham was concerned why there was no fee for engineering but there was an architect fee for the Brewster School project.
Bob Yarmatino of Middlefield thank the Board for their work on the budget Mr. Yarmatino provided the Board with a printout showing the overall income in Middlefield is less than the income in Durham. He reviewed the budget process used by the Middlefield Board of Finance and addressed the issue of state funding being reduced. Mr. Yarmatino addressed the effects of closing a school and how it affects the Minimum Budget Requirement.

Jon Brayshaw, First Selectman for the Town of Middlefield has a concern about the number of houses for sale in Middlefield.

Teresa Opalacz of Durham thanked the Board for the work on the budget. Ms. Opalacz asked what was going to happen with the portable classroom. She would like to see the Board put more emphasis on actual to actual. She would also urge the Board not to reduce programs.

Donia Viola of Durham asked is the Board was considering renegotiating with Dattco. Mrs. Viola wanted clarification on the $35,000 for wellness and safety resources. She feels the budget can still be trimmed and stated that due to declining enrollment there should be no increase of staff. She also feels the solar panels should not be included in the referendum. It should only be for the school budget and the Brewster School roof replacement.

Hearing no more questions Mrs. Flanagan closed the hearing at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Johnson