

Board of Education

Regional District 13

April 13, 2016

The Regional District 13 Board of Education held a public hearing on Wednesday, April 13, 2016 in the auditorium at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, CT. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Fronc, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Dr. Onofreo, Mr. Renninghoff, and Mr. Willett. 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.

Mrs. Flanagan began the Board's presentation on the 2016-2017 Board of Education proposed budget. Mrs. Flanagan presented a budget overview providing the proposed expenditure increase over the last 3 years along with the budget percent change over the past 9 years. Mrs. Flanagan reviewed major reductions in the 2016-2017 proposed budget. She stated that the net reduction of (\$365,173) is a result from the closing of Korn School. Mrs. Flanagan also reviewed student enrollment, the estimated tax impact for both Durham and Middlefield and the educational cost sharing over the past seven years.

Mrs. Adams said that curriculum, instruction and assessment drive the budget stating examples such as all-day Kindergarten, Common Core, STEM, Chromebooks, and professional development. The Board is proposing Reader's Workshop and reorganizing programs to include Reading and Math Specialists. Education is always changing and Mrs. Adams commended the teachers of District 13.

Dr. Onofreo reviewed the Budget Summary expenditures comparing the 2015-2016 expenditures with the 2016-2017 expenditures. Dr. Onofreo stated there is a -1.84% change or (\$691,014.00) Dr. Onofreo also presented a detail of estimated receipts discussing our MTA program and state and federal grants. Dr. Onofreo concluded his portion of the presentation discussing the fund balance stating that the fund balance from prior year audited financial statements is applied to subsequent years' budgeted receipts.

Mr. Hicks spoke about staffing including the closing of Korn School, declining enrollment and the reduction in administrative staff. Mr. Hicks presented a graph of projected enrollment district wide. He stated the reductions in salaries are due to retirements. Reductions in Health insurance premiums are due to the modest 2.99% increase and staff moving to a high deductible health insurance plan.

Mr. Moore discussed the debt service stating that there is a steady decline in the debt payment schedule. He also stated that the money in the reserve account is for planned expenses.

Mrs. Flanagan ended the presentation addressing the MBR advising the public that this figure is imposed by the state and at this time the Board does not know what the final figure is.

Mrs. Flanagan opened the floor up for questions. She thanked Dr. Veronesi, Mr. Melnik, the administrators, teachers, and staff for taking care of our children every day.

Mr. Hicks, as moderator set the rules. The public should state their name and the town they are from. He also asked that they limit their questions.

Mr. Stengel of Durham referred to the MBR slide and stated a waiver should be granted as the District is closing a school. He thanked the Board for their work and recommended that further cuts can be made. He stated he did not want the proposed administrator position in the budget. He also suggested that class size be looked at. He recommended reducing teachers at Brewster, Lyman and Memorial schools.

Mr. Irish, Middlefield BOF summarized his discussion of last week stating that \$691,000 reduction is inadequate and asked the Board to consider a total reduction of \$1,000,000. He addressed the MBR issue, asked for further reduction in the salary line, and asked the Board to look at the new administrative position. His suggestions do not impact children and programming.

Mr. Yamartino, Middlefield BOF presented the information he received from the state regarding ECS funding. Mr. Yarmartino also feels cuts can be made from the salary line. He stated that the recent renovations at Central Office and Readers' Workshop were not in last year's budget and STEM funding was from 2015-16.

Ms. Adams from Middlefield stated that MBR is very confusing. There are many ways you qualify according to state stature and what you are allowed. District 13 is the only Board that has applied.

Ms. Perruccio referred to the slide showing declining enrollment and asked if there is a reduction in SPED enrollment.

Mr. Peterson of Durham referred to MBR and not knowing what it can be reduced by. Year after year there is a budget surplus. He appreciates the hard work of the Board.

Mr. Parmelee of Durham commended the superintendent for her hard work on the budget and also was impressed by what the Board of Finance of Middlefield had to say. Mr. Parmelee commented on the state of the economy in Connecticut and that Durham does not welcome business. He questioned why there is a full time athletic director, maintenance staff's use of District vehicles, and permanent injuries down the road from football. Mr. Parmelee also is opposed to activity fees at the high school.

Mr. Nick of the Middlefield Board of Finance thanked the Board of Education for their efforts. With the decline in ECS grants, taxes will be rising. Mr. Nick asked the Board to look at ways for potential savings.

Mrs. Quincy of Middlefield attended the transitional night at Memorial School and does not feel confident sending her 3rd grade student to Memorial next year. There is not enough room in the building and feels the Board of Education rushed into the decision. She also expressed a concern regarding cuts to support staff and ABA staff.

Mr. Kleeman of Durham asked if the monies can be used differently to pay down the debt and make a permanent reduction.

Mrs. Stephan of Durham thanked the Board for their time and effort. She asked that the Board not to compromise the children, just to reduce the budget.

A Middlefield resident stated that her taxes have increased however her income has not increased. The bulk of her real estate taxes go to education. She encouraged the Board to strongly consider the recommendations from the BOF of Middlefield and Durham.

Mr. Stoup of Durham also stated that it's an economic reality that the majority of taxes come from the Board of Education budget.

Mr. Doyle of Durham stated that the Board of Education agonized over every line item and encourages the public to have confidence in the Board of Education in reaching a common goal.

Mrs. Kleeman of Durham asked for the Board to provide the cost per pupil.

Mr. Melnik addressed Mrs. Kleeman's question: State \$15,726.00, All Regional Districts \$16,858.00, and RSD13 \$17,973.00.

Dr. Veronesi stated that there is a real commitment of the children of District 13. To respond to the needs in education she has recommended the proposed Director of Organizational Development. She assured the public that she is committed to providing the children in our District with the best possible education.

Mrs. Flanagan stated that the Board hears the community. The Board now faces the challenge of making cuts that will not impact students.

Hearing no more questions Mrs. Flanagan closed the meeting at 10:05 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Maureen Johnson
Recording Secretary