

**Board of Education**

**Regional School District 13**

**August 24, 2016**

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**Board of Education**

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The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, August 24, 2016 at 7:00 pm in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut. Board members present: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff, Mr. Willett and Mr. Yamartino. Mr. Moore joined the meeting via telephone.

Board members absent: None.

Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Hicks called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm after it was determined that a quorum was present. He welcomed all to the first official meeting of this Board.

#### **Pledge of Allegiance**

Mrs. Petrella led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment at this point in the meeting.

**Next Board Meeting - September 14, 2016, 7:00 pm, in the Coginchaug Regional High School Library**

#### **Approval of Agenda**

Lucy Petrella asked to add Committee Assignments to the agenda. Mr. Hicks added the item under New Business. Mrs. Petrella made a motion to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Mr. Renninghoff.

In favor of approving the amended agenda: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff, Mr. Willett and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

**Approval of Minutes - June 8, 2016 Amended and July 6, 2016**

Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the amended minutes of June 8, 2016.

In favor of approving the amended minutes of June 8, 2016: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Renninghoff and Mr. Willett. Mr. Yamartino and Mrs. Petrella abstained. Motion passed.

Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Mr. Augur, to approve the minutes of July 6, 2016. A typo was pointed out on the bottom of page 3, with a misspelling of the word attended. Mrs. Petrella asked about the Public Comment section and felt that specific concerns should be listed rather than generalized. Mrs. Petrella felt that more specificity would add validity to the public concerns and the Board's genuine interest. Mrs. Petrella also thought any correspondence that is received should be attached to the minutes for further reference. Mr. Hicks explained that that has been discussed previously and a new clerk will be doing minutes from the recording of the meeting. Mr. Yamartino suggested that Missy Booth's email be attached to the minutes as she referred to that when she made her comments at the last meeting.

Mr. Willett commented that this is not the point in the agenda to discuss how to do minutes. Mr. Willett also commented that if correspondence is received via email, the Board members have essentially been advised and it would not have to also be in the minutes.

Dr. Friedrich referred back to Mrs. Petrella's comments about specificity and how communications received are publicly reported. Again, Mr. Hicks did not feel this was the place to do that and it should be an agenda item.

In favor of approving the minutes, as presented: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff, Mr. Willett and Mr. Yamartino. Dr. Friedrich voted nay and Mrs. Flanagan and Mr. Hicks abstained. Motion passed.

Dr. Friedrich stated that people voting in the affirmative and the negative should be clearly identified in the recording of the meeting. The vote was retaken, with a show of hands.

### **Communications**

Mr. Hicks reminded the Board members that the New Teacher Luncheon is being held tomorrow at Cuginchaug at 12:15 pm. Convocation is Monday at 7:45 am. All members are invited to both events.

Mr. Renninghoff reported that he had received an email from a Durham resident, on behalf of the Durham-Middlefield Falcon's football club, with a concern about them having to pay \$100 per night to use Korn School for cheerleading practice. They would be using it three nights per week, from September to November, which would be \$300 per week. He was asked to look into it for the football club and how it compares to others using Korn School. Mr. Renninghoff emailed Dr. Veronesi about the issue and they will be discussing ways to make it a little more palatable for groups that use the facility. Mr. Willett also received the same email.

Mrs. Petrella reiterated that she would like to see discussion about the content of minutes be put on the next agenda.

**Business Manager's Report**

Mr. Melnik was not present at the meeting, but had left a report with Dr. Veronesi. During last week's storm, there had been a major lightning strike at Memorial School and one of the trees in the courtyard was hit and the fire protection panel was lost, there was some damage to the safety monitor system and several support pumps for the water system were damaged. The insurance company has been notified and a claim has been placed. Inspectors are reviewing the damage. Dr. Veronesi got an update from Jim Croteau and several schools are in the same situation as we are and vendors are scrambling to help schools get online. Security is back up, the network is set but the fire protection panel is still being worked on. We are currently working with the Fire Marshal to talk about a fire watch. The hope is that the fire panel will be fixed by next Wednesday, when children arrive for school.

The Business Office has completed the ED-001 financial report that is required to be submitted by August 31<sup>st</sup>. Tippy Popp did an incredible job on that. Mr. Yamartino asked for a copy which Dr. Veronesi will provide.

Lastly, all the excess furniture and equipment has been gathered at Korn School and segregated into types in various rooms. A tag sale will be held in the Fall, sometime after the Fair. Rob Francis and his summer staff did incredible work on that project. There have also been two days in August when staff from around the district could take various equipment for their classrooms.

**Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Veronesi reiterated the invitation to Board members to the convocation on Monday morning. Dr. Veronesi also publicly acknowledged the incredible effort that went into moving and closing Korn School. Over 25 classrooms and close to 2,000 boxes were moved. District 13's schools are

ready to be opened next week. The student workers and custodial staff truly did a yeoman's job and hats are off to Rob Francis for his incredible organization.

Dr. Veronesi also reported that 17 new staff members have been hired this summer, including Director of Organizational Development Maryellen Manning, Director of Technology Ken Pietrasko, a new data specialist at the high school, three new music teachers, eight classroom teachers, two school psychologists and one special ed teacher. These new hires are mostly due to retirement and people moving on to other districts.

The district's SBAC scores were released on Thursday as a quick overview and superintendents had a conference call on Friday morning with the Commissioner who is generally pleased with the growth across the state. There is a persistent concern about performance in mathematics across the State of Connecticut.

The Student Achievement Committee will be meeting in a couple of weeks and then, in October when more data is received from the State, the Board will get a more comprehensive presentation from Dr. Berry. As a high-level overview, there was cohort growth in math shown from fifth to sixth, sixth to seventh and seventh to eighth, with significant growth noted in students who were fifth graders two years ago and sixth graders last year. In English language arts, cohort growth was seen across all grade levels with the exception of seventh to eighth, where there was a very minimal decline. Growth was seen in math in grade levels fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth and, in English language arts, in fifth, sixth and seventh. The district does continue to perform below the DRG average, but relative standing has improved in math in grades 5, 6 and 7 and, in English Language Arts, in all grade levels tested.

Dr. Veronesi wanted to follow up on kindergarten class size and Board policy 6113 regarding inclusion of an aide in the kindergarten classrooms, concerns brought up by Missy Booth at the last meeting. In gathering history about how the policy was written and what has actually gone on in kindergarten classrooms, Mrs. Heckler, a principal in the district for 15 years, indicated that the policy has generally been interpreted that there is an adult in the classroom during academic times. This does not necessarily mean a paraprofessional is present during play time, snack or when the kids go to specials. Dr. Veronesi has been in constant communication with Mr. Ford, who has kindergarten class sizes of 18, 18 and 19.

Dr. Veronesi reported that when putting a schedule together, what often happens in kindergarten is that the year gets underway and the teachers work around different times in the classroom. They would then look at the paraprofessional support that is available to be sure there is a para in the classroom during academic times. This schedule does not specifically exist at this point in time. Dr. Veronesi commented that the full-day administrative meeting was held

today and they are looking at the availability of paraprofessionals so that a para will be available during academic time in the kindergarten classrooms.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned that she has been in touch with Mr. Hicks, the Policy Subcommittee chair, to suggest that the Board take a look at the policy to either revise it, suspend it, change it or leave it as is. Dr. Veronesi also mentioned that she has been in the district for three-and-a-half years and this is the first time this issue has been brought to her attention.

Mr. Yamartino asked about the impact if the Board were to ask for a full-time paraprofessional in the kindergarten classrooms. Dr. Veronesi stated that she would have to ask the principals to look at that and will bring that information back to the Board.

Mrs. Petrella asked if Dr. Veronesi has gotten back to any of the parents that had questions to explain the policy. Dr. Veronesi stated that she has spoken to Missy Booth regarding the conversation she had with Mr. Ford and also asked Mr. Ford to directly contact two of the parents. Mrs. Petrella felt that the parents would be happy to hear that a para will be present at least during the academic portion of their child's day. Dr. Veronesi agreed to get that information out to parents.

Dr. Veronesi went on to address the question of adding a bus stop at Lake Beseck and it is her understanding that Lake Beseck has always had one bus stop at the beach area. The bus company feels that this has worked in the past and it would be their recommendation to continue with the one stop.

Mrs. Boyle asked if there were any late registrations for kindergarten classes and Dr. Veronesi stated that there were probably five students who registered after the registration period. Dr. Veronesi confirmed that the kindergarten classes at Brewster are 15, 15 and 16 with Lyman being 18, 18 and 19. (Dr. Veronesi later corrected that Brewster has four kindergarten classes: 15, 15, 15 and 16.)

## **Committee Reports**

### **Utilization Update**

Mrs. Flanagan reported that the Utilization Committee met in early July and had asked representatives from Day Pitney to address the letter from Laura Francis that Dr. Veronesi shared with the Board at the June meeting regarding the long-term lease with purchase at the end of the lease. Day Pitney commented that a long-term lease with ownership at the end of the lease is essentially a financing agreement and, under those terms, it is possible for the Board of Ed to

enter into that type of agreement, however a 99-year-lease or 50-year-lease is probably not feasible and would probably create problems with the State Department of Education in terms of the waiver that had been applied for. That length of a lease would extend far beyond the useful life of the building. Day Pitney felt it would be reasonable to do a 10- or 20-year lease, but not much beyond that.

The Utilization Committee had learned a few years back, and it has since been confirmed by Day Pitney, that the Board of Ed is not authorized to enter into an operating lease. The Committee has also learned that the language in the waiver granted by the State of Connecticut grants the authority to Durham, not Region 13, so the Board will have to go back to the legislature to have that language corrected. This is the waiver for the grant payback in the amount of approximately \$635,000.

The Utilization Committee agreed that they should confirm the level of interest from either Middlefield or Durham with Korn School. Ed Bailey has informed them that Middlefield is essentially not interested in acquiring new assets at this time, including Korn School or any other building. Laura Francis confirmed that the Town of Durham is interested although bonding is not likely and an outright purchase does not seem feasible. Mrs. Francis would be more interested in pursuing some kind of lease agreement.

Mrs. Flanagan also reported that in discussions about leasing, a suggestion was made to perhaps go to the legislature to ask for authorization to function as a lessor which would expand the District's options. The Committee is in the process of looking into that.

Day Pitney is working on a letter to the Town of Durham explaining issues that would have to be addressed, including any land use issues, lease options, legislative approval for an operating lease and defining the property and addressing any boundary concerns. The Committee is reluctant to go forward with any expenditures until they know Durham's level of interest.

Day Pitney will also present recommended language to go to the legislators regarding the correction of the waiver language and to seek approval to enter into a lease agreement, as needed.

Mrs. Boyle asked if the Committee has looked into other lease options or reached out to real estate agents. Mrs. Flanagan explained that the grant of the waiver for the payback of the \$635,000 is worded to be awarded if the property is put to municipal use. Any use by an outside party would result in the negation of the waiver; therefore the Committee has not really pursued any interest outside of the Town of Durham.

Mr. Yamartino reported that it had also been discussed for the District to quit claim the deed to the two towns and the two towns could then lease, with an option to buy. Mrs. Flanagan stated that they would discuss that with Day Pitney.

Mrs. Petrella asked about maintenance/operational costs of the building if it were leased. Mrs. Flanagan stated that the discussions have been to enter into a triple net lease which essentially means all operating costs would be the responsibility of the lessor, though these have only been preliminary discussions.

#### **ERC Committee**

Mrs. Boyle asked why the last ERC meeting was canceled and if that meeting will be rescheduled. Dr. Veronesi explained that Mr. Moore needed to cancel the meeting and he will reschedule it.

#### **Policy Committee**

Mr. Hicks reported that the Policy Committee will be meeting shortly and hoped to set a date tonight for the next meeting.

#### **Student Achievement Committee**

A question was asked as to when Student Achievement Committee will meet and Dr. Veronesi stated that dates were set on the calendar, but an agenda will be sent out prior to the meeting. Dr. Friedrich commented that no committee meeting dates are listed on the website.

Mr. Willett asked if a centralized Board Google calendar could be created and also questioned the timeline about Korn School. Mrs. Flanagan stated that Silver and Petrucelli came to the last Utilization Committee meeting and they indicated that they were on schedule with the project and expected to be nearing completion on a condition analysis of the building. They do not intend to be on schedule with the initial dates in the proposal, at request of the Board. Mrs. Flanagan will try to get an email out this week with an expected completion date. Mrs. Flanagan reviewed the project which starts with a condition analysis and then goes into evaluating programming needs as a next step. Dr. Veronesi also explained that Silver and Petrucelli will be meeting with the administrators as well and will then hold focus groups at the schools.

**ACES**

Mr. Hicks explained that he chairs the ACES Board of Directors and has been meeting with the Executive Director all summer. Mr. Hicks hopes to have a full update for the Board at the next meeting.

**New Business**

**Field Trip Request B National Honor Society LEAD Conference, Washington, DC**

Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Flanagan, to approve the field trip request for the National Honor Society LEAD Conference in Washington, DC. Mr. Hicks added that the administration has the right to postpone or cancel the trip as necessary, due to circumstances beyond their control. Mrs. Boyle agreed.

In favor of approving the motion: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff, Mr. Willett and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed by show of hands.

**Committee Assignments**

Mrs. Petrella thanked Mr. Hicks for adding the item to the agenda. Mrs. Petrella asked what the procedure was for assigning members to the different committees and Mr. Hicks explained that it has typically been on the request of the Board members to the Chair. Mrs. Flanagan commented that the by-laws state that the Chair assigns members to the committees.

Mrs. Petrella also commented that all of the committees have representation from both towns except the Utilization Committee where there are no Middlefield representatives. Mrs. Petrella felt that both towns have a vested interest in what happens with Korn School and asked how both towns could be fairly represented. Mr. Hicks personally feels that that the 10 members of the Board represent everyone and did not recall this issue ever coming up before. Mrs. Petrella agreed, but felt that this would be critical on that particular committee. It was suggested that Mrs. Petrella bring her concern to the Chair directly.

Mrs. Boyle did feel that the issue of representation on the Utilization Committee should be spoken about at a public meeting. She had been asked last year and refused, but wanted to make sure that she is not negating the opportunity for the other three Middlefield members.

**Public Comment**

Missy Booth thanked the Board for the discussion tonight, particularly the specificity of the minutes as her concern was not just the class size. Ms. Booth felt like the policy was being ignored and would like to see an aide in the classroom at all times, as the policy states. Ms. Booth commented that play time at Lyman is considered the time to plan your work and some children may actually continue with education during that time. She was concerned that if there are behavioral issues, the other children may not have the opportunity to continue learning. Morning meeting, or circle time, is not considered education, but they do in fact count the days in school and do the calendar. Ms. Booth feels that the entire day is education. She is happy that Brewster got a fourth kindergarten class, but her daughter still has 19 kids in her class.

Cindy Saraceno reiterated Ms. Booth's comments. Her daughter is in a kindergarten class with 18 students. Ms. Saraceno's concern is behavior or medical issues which take the teacher away from the classroom. She also feels strongly that there should be a paraprofessional in all of the classrooms at all times.

Carissa Connell, a mother of four in the district and an educator in Madison Public Schools, commented that Madison has adopted a one-para-per-classroom in all grades, K through 4. It has made a huge impact on the classrooms. She feels there are students in kindergarten who cannot read, cannot work independently and present a tremendous learning range. For every student in the classroom over 15, the teacher will spend an extra three to four minutes per child for everything being done. Ms. Connell feels that there needs to be a consistent paraprofessional in the classroom. She feels strongly about this and has seen it succeed in the district where she teaches and would love to see it for her own children.

Joshua Saraceno explained that he moved to Durham/Middlefield for the education, community and the people. His daughter's education is extremely important to him. Mr. Saraceno thought that since there are less children in the district there should be less children per classroom. He always thought Durham and Middlefield had a top-notch system and cannot imagine trying to teach 18 or 19 kindergartners at one time. He does not want his daughter to sit idly in a class while a teacher is trying to tend to 18 other kids, especially in the case of an emergency.

Mary Elizabeth Taylor has four kids in the district, with her youngest going into kindergarten. Ms. Taylor was at Lyman last year when a child bolted away from the kindergarten class and the aide had to go across the yard, leaving all the other kids behind. She feels that that is not out of the ordinary. Ms. Taylor also mentioned that half of the kids going into kindergarten at Lyman this year have birthdays after August and reminded the Board that these are little kids.

Kristen Prout, parent of a Brewster kindergartner thanked the Board for listening to their concerns.

Lisa Seales felt that the entire day in grades K-4 is academic and there is no such thing as non-academic time. Critical social skills are happening at all times.

**Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Renninghoff, seconded by Dr. Friedrich.

In favor of the motion to adjourn: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Hicks, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Renninghoff, Mr. Willett and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed by show of hands.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First