

**REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION - SPECIAL MEETING**  
**ANNUAL HEARING**  
**April 2, 2019**

*A special meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on April 2, 2019 in the Student Commons of the Haddam-Killingworth Middle School. Board of Education Chair, Joanne Nesti, called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.*

**Members Present:** *Peter Sonski, Eric Couture, Gerry Matthews, Eileen Blewett, Brenda Buzzi, Kathleen Zandi, Maura Wallin, Joel D'Angelo, Sue Williams, Suzanne Sack and Joanne Nesti*

**Members Absent:** *None.*

**Also Present:** *Superintendent of Schools, Howard Thiery, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Holly Hageman, Director of Finance, Martha Vaughn, Principal of Haddam-Killingworth Middle School, Dr. Jennifer Olsen, Principal of Burr Elementary School, Eric Larson, Principal of Haddam Elementary School, Brienne Whidden, Principal of Killingworth Elementary School, Dennis Reed, Student Services Director, Dr. Kris Lindsay, Vice President of HK Education Association, Robin Duffield, Special Education Coordinator, Tonya Gorgone, First Selectwoman for the Town of Killingworth, Cathy Iino, Haddam Selectman, Melissa Schlag, Resident State Trooper, Enrico Milardo, and Board Clerk, Jamie Sciascia*

**Visitors:** *Approximately 25*

**Call to Order/Opening of Meeting:** *Board of Education Chair, Joanne Nesti, called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.*

**Presentation of the Board of Education Proposed Budget 2019-2020:**

*Board Vice Chair, Suzanne Sack, presented the Board of Education Proposed Budget for 2019-2020 fiscal year for Regional School District No. 17.*

**Community Input regarding Board of Education Proposed Budget:**

*The following Community Members addressed the Board regarding their concerns with the Board of Education Proposed Budget:*

*Arthur E. Collins of Higganum addressed the Board. He spoke about being ranked 76% and asked whether the other percentage of schools pay more than our District.*

*Jeff Sturges of Haddam addressed the Board. He thanked the Board for their hard work and getting a smaller increase to the towns with a savings of \$200 per household. He addressed his concerns: he spoke about the former school psychologist that came to one of the Board meetings to address the current operational problems at HKMS, the limited space for special education even with current enrollment numbers, and the behavior challenges taking place. Jeff spoke about pods, that there has been no consideration about closing HES that is in the center of town, there was never a town vote and or insight if the town wanted to go forward with this. Jeff further spoke about the possible future costs if the restructuring doesn't work out and the enrollment projections are off. He asked to wait a year so all questions and concerns can be addressed. Lastly, Jeff inquired whether or not there could be a question on the voting ballot for in case the budget fails, as to whether or not they support the restructuring and why they are voting no.*

*Rebecca Drew of Killingworth addressed the Board. She spoke about increasing the security cameras and equipment at HKIS, as well as increasing hall monitors. Further, she addressed the \$90,000 decrease in transportation to which Superintendent Thiery stated that the cost of Special Education transportation has decreased. Rebecca further addressed class sizes and feels that it will impede the children's education if it falls near 20. Lastly, she spoke on the HKIS playground money to build it.*

*Aydin Caginalp of Haddam addressed the Board. He thanked the Board for putting the Budget spreadsheet together. He had a question on the Summary line item for Transportation and the Object line item summary and inquired whether they were different. He asked the Board to take the look at it.*

*Alexandria Karpiej of Higganum addressed the Board. She spoke about how she is in Second Grade at HES and was talking with her friends at recess and would like to help raise money with baking cookies, lemonade stands and holding a toy tag sale to raise money to keep HES open and save her school. She asked the Board not to close it and addressed her letter from herself and the children at HES.*

*Joe Rizzo of Haddam addressed the Board. He raised the question about how if HES is ranked 16 for score performance, and 75% per pupil for expenditures, why would the Board want to change something that is working so well? He briefly read a piece of an article regarding the Old Saybrook School that was closed a school and then reversed its decision. He stated he will be voting no for the budget and explained that their constituents do not support the closing of HES.*

*Linda Fleming of Higganum addressed the Board. She spoke about how she believes that 4<sup>th</sup> graders shouldn't be in the same school with 8<sup>th</sup> graders and also spoke on cost savings and it not being accurate. She said that there are so many problems with house values since learning of HES closing, and then with the store possible closing there, there will be more decreased values. She urged the Board to reconsider its decision.*

*Shawna Goldfarb of Higganum addressed the Board. She said she studied the past budgets and this one, but also did not get a more detailed budget as she requested. She also asked for a breakdown savings if HES doesn't close. She spoke about not having a number figure for moving costs and playground at HKIS and feels there should be no vote until we see those figures. She asked for more information. She further spoke about the petition that was signed by over 100 people to pause the school closing and how parents that want to vote no are afraid to because they feel that the Board will start cutting things like Special Education programs. She also highly recommends what Jeff Sturges recommended to put a question on the Budget Ballot whether or not they support the restructuring and why they are voting no.*

*Neal Perron of Higganum addressed the Board. He asked the Board whether or not they prepared another budget when this one gets voted down by the Towns.*

*Haddam Selectman, Melissa Schlag, addressed the Board. She spoke about the Old Saybrook restructuring and that they are undoing it and asked if the Board was aware if this. Board Vice Chair, Suzanne Sack, spoke about the Old Saybrook School Article in the Haddam Bulletin, and how they restructured it due to enrollment changes. She stated that the Modular for education was not working, groups and studies were done, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers were not in support of change. Suzanne also spoke on the 40 focused groups, and that all town comments came out 1/3, 1/3 and 1/3. Further, students traveled on the same buses as their 8<sup>th</sup> grade peers and were not segregated. She stated how the Old Saybrook module is very different from our module.*

*Katie Packtor of Higganum addressed the Board. She spoke briefly about the Old Saybrook school restructuring and thinks maybe that they weren't thorough enough why the restructuring didn't work out for them. She said we should take another year to vet properly, getting data, etc.*

*Craig Judge of Killingworth addressed the Board. He thanked Board Members, Joel D'Angelo and Eileen Blewett for meeting with a group of constituents. He asked how much money was sent on surveys and focus groups for input to the Board regarding HES to which the Board replied none.*

*Maria Lippincott of Haddam addressed the Board. She spoke about how her whole house will be voting no to the budget because of the restructuring.*

*First Selectwoman for the Town of Killingworth, Cathy lino, addressed the Board. She thanked the Board for all the incredible work they put forward on the Budget. She stated how Killingworth will loss \$200k this year and pay roughly \$40,000 towards Teachers pension. She believes this was a hard decision, but educational a good one.*

*Monika Karpeij of Higganum addressed the Board. She came to the US, and worked 4 jobs, and moved to Haddam 5 years ago with her family. She feels that the District will never be the same with the restructuring. She wondered why the Board would close HES if it is going so well. She spoke about the transportation and longer bus rides. Superintendent Thiery stated he surveyed every route and all will be under an hour which includes Haddam Neck. He also said that bus routes will change. Monika briefly spoke on enrollment and class sizes. She stated that she feels it is the Superintendent' personal reason to close HES and it is not for the children.*

*Jennifer Petrillo of Haddam addressed the Board. She spoke about how most of the Town of Haddam will be voting no to the Budget, and stated how Mothers in town are scared for their kids coming to the Middle School and being with older kids. She also spoke on the increase of class sizes.*

**Adjournment:**

*The meeting adjourned at 8:25 PM.*

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Jamie Sciascia*  
Board Clerk

Approval:

  
Eileen Blewett, Secretary

Date:

7/2/19