

**REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**  
**ANNUAL HEARING**  
**May 18, 2015**

*A special meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on May 18, 2015 in the Central Office Board Room. Board of Education Chair, Sue Twachtman, called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.*

***Members Present:** Kathy Brown, Becky Valenti, Amy Jacques-Purdy, Jeannie Young, Susan Dean, Joel D'Angelo and Sue Twachtman*

***Members Absent:** Brian Gamache, Michele Amendola, Karen Perry, and Dan Chase*

***Also Present:** Superintendent of Schools, Howard Thiery, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Holly Hageman, and Director of Fiscal Operations, Martha Vaughn, and Board Clerk Larissa Johnson*

***Visitors:** Approx. 20*

**Call to Order/Opening of Meeting**

*Board of Education Chair, Sue Twachtman called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.*

**Presentation of proposed 2015-2016 Board of Education Budget**

*Board Treasurer Joel D'Angelo presented the 2015-2016 Board of Education Budget.*

**Community Input regarding proposed 2015-2016 Board of Education Budget**

*The following members of the community addressed the Board;*

*Arthur Collins of Higganum addressed the Board. He asked what amount the budget was reduced by and then expressed to the Board that many members of the Haddam 60 Club are unaware of when the Board of Education meets and he suggested that the Board try to have more of its meetings noticed in the Middletown Press. He also suggested that the Board could send out mailings, put signs up around the grocery stores, and tell students to tell their parents about meetings.*

*Jen Rau of Higganum addressed the Board. She asked a few questions regarding specific line items, including Occupational & Physical Therapy and Snow Removal. She said that she hears everyone saying that the Board needs to "cut, cut, cut" the budget, but if she asks them where, they say everywhere or have no suggestions. She also felt that communication regarding the budget could be improved.*

*Robert Medina of Killingworth addressed the Board. He asked whether the Board has been benchmarking against other local school districts in terms of salary and cost per pupil. He also asked about*

*the health insurance renewal costs as well as Workers Comp and suggested that the Board continue to look at these areas.*

*Arthur Collins of Higganum addressed the Board again. He expressed a concern that people may be voting against the Board of Education budget because it is too low and that if the budget were voted down again, that the Board would continue to reduce the budget in spite of some votes being cast because they may feel the budget is already too low. Superintendent Thiery responded by acknowledging that this is what is problematic of no-votes because the budget is too low. He said that the Board offers this hearing process through budget season and encourages the community to come out because their input and advocacy is welcome. Art Collins also asked about the transportation contract award. Superintendent Thiery responded that the transportation contract was awarded to STA at an increase of less than 1% over the next five years, which the most aggressive offer over than many of the other responses received.*

*Paula Bucko of Higganum addressed the Board. She said that she is here to support the Board and Superintendent and that word needs to get out in a better way as many people are unaware of the budget process.*

*Izzy Brown of Haddam and Joseph Bosco of Haddam addressed the Board and presented a letter expressing their thoughts and ideas regarding the budget. They talked about the different versions of LEAP that they experienced while at HKMS and also the idea of Pay-to-Play, which they believe would not be fair and that students and their families already pay into sports activities when they have to purchase equipment. The also said that they thought the idea of allowing advertising on the sports fields for the purposes of revenue generation was a good idea. They also said that they felt the revised plan for World Languages particularly at the HKMS was a good idea. They then suggested that on the ballot for the Board of Education budget referendum, the Board should have additional questions where voters could indicate whether they feel the budget is "too high" or "too low" if they are voting against the budget. They also suggested having a mock vote for high school students to increase their interest in the process and to get a sense of how students feel about the proposed budget. Izzy and Joseph also said that they felt that it was awful that the late bus program is being eliminated. They said that it is fine for other districts not to offer a late bus, but that it is a really good thing for our community to have as it allows for students to participate in afterschool activities and also to participate in tutoring sessions. They also presented a list of 75 people who supported their letter.*

*Cheryl Haase of Higganum addressed the Board. She said that her oldest is going to the Middle School and is excited about being able to participate in afterschool clubs and would like to participate in the late bus program. She suggested having centralized bus stop locations to increase utilization and hopefully save costs.*

*Melissa Schlag, First Selectwoman of Haddam addressed the Board. She thanked the students, Izzy Brown and Joseph Bosco for speaking their mind. She asked the Board to do anything it can to find the funding for the late bus. She said she thought that a mock vote for students is a good idea and she suggested that the Board look into solar energy programs for the District. She also suggested that the Board look at the state health insurance program.*

*Joanne Nesti of Haddam addressed the Board. She asked about the costs related to the start-up of the Makerspaces and 18-21 programs. Superintendent Thiery explained that there is no cost in year-one for Makerspaces as it will utilize many of the resources that the District has on-hand. Superintendent Thiery also said that the 18-21 will similarly utilizing existing spaces and resources, as well as staff and the only the cost associated is to outfit the room, including computers and kitchen equipment. He expects that the savings from being able to keep our 18-21 year old students in-district for this program will well exceed the cost to implement the program and that there is no additional cost over the existing program.*

*Christine Kehrley of Higganum addressed the Board. She asked about the 18-21 year old program and whether the staff being asked to work in the program are aware of the transition. Superintendent Thiery responded that the staff involved are aware and were an important part of the development of the program.*

*Board Chair Sue Twachtman thanked everyone for their comments.*

## **Adjournment**

*Board Chair Sue Twachtman called for the meeting to adjourn at 8:14 PM.*

*Respectfully submitted,*



Larissa B. Johnson  
Board Clerk

Approval: Becky Valenti Date: June 2 2015  
Becky Valenti, Secretary