

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17
BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING
Community Input on the 2014-2015 Budget
March 24, 2014

A meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on March 24, 2014 in the Central Office Old Middle School Gym. Board of Education Chair, Sue Twachtman, called the meeting to order at 6:37 PM.

Members Present: *Kathy Brown, Michele Amendola (arrived at 6:40), Susan Dean, Becky Valenti, Karen Perry, Dan Chase, Brian Gamache, Joel D'Angelo, Amy Jacques-Purdy, Jeannie Young, and Sue Twachtman*

Members Absent: *None*

Also Present: *Superintendent of Schools, Howard Thiery and Director of Fiscal Operations, Martha Vaughn, and Interim Board Clerk Dawn MacLeod*

Visitors: *19*

Call to Order/Opening of Meeting

Board of Education Chair, Sue Twachtman called the meeting to order at 6:37 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Input on the 2014-2015 Budget

The following members of the community addressed the Board:

Steven Banaletti of Higganum stated that the Board of Education should try to maintain a zero percent increase. One thing he suggested the Board look at is to increase class sizes. He also stated to minimize the dollar amount of the audited balances in the future. Mr. Banaletti was pleased that the Early Retirement Plan and the non fulfillment of all the retirement slots would help keep the budget down.

Arthur Collins of Higganum supports education and always has. He suggested to the Board that the bus contract should have the communities input. Superintendent Thiery stated that the bus contract will be on the agenda at the April 1st Board of Education meeting. Mr. Collins said that he has heard comments from the community about the decrease in population and how it should affect the district's budget. He clarified that there are costs to run a business and open the buildings whether there are fewer students. He also stated that the district needs to keep good people employed and treated well or they will find other employment. He reminded the community that the state law prohibits the budget to go below zero percent.

Greg Nicholas of Haddam talked about the Wi-Fi at the high school. He is in support of the Wi-Fi and the "bring your own device" to school program; however, he believes that the current Wi-Fi is not ample for the number of students who rely on Wi-Fi for their devices. He stated that parents shouldn't have to pay for a data plan in order for their high school children to use their devices in school once the districts Wi-Fi service is upgraded. He encourages the Board to shop for a quality Wi-Fi package that would handle the quantity of users.

Joseph Laurenza of Haddam stated that education is great but at what cost? He talked about the decrease in population in Killingworth. Mr. Laurenza stated that the Board should keep the budget at zero percent increase. He also stated that the District should hire someone for four to five months to work on the budget, and who specializes in budgets.

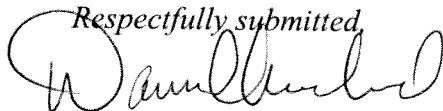
Suzanne Sack of Killingworth talked to the Board about challenges of keeping education high but costs low. She stated that the Early Retirement Plan decreased the teacher's salary line but the Support and Custodian salary lines increased. Superintendent Thiery clarified that the teacher's salary's increase per contract but the salary line decreased because of fewer teachers. Ms. Sack suggested that the Board look at the number of teacher/student ratios. She noted that the district's Special Education program is larger than surrounding districts. She also suggested that a portion of the Workers Compensation expenses be passed down to the employee who uses it. She concludes that the escalating school budget should have a clear story supporting the increase so that the topic can be focused on the importance of the children.

Arthur Collins addressed the Board again and stated that the community should remember that the salary lines should increase because of the cost of living increase. Mr. Collins talked about his daughters' experiences in the District and stated the importance of the Special Education department. He continued that he thinks the government should fund and run the schools.

Adjournment

Board Chair, Sue Twachtman called for the meeting to adjourn at 7:09 PM.

Respectfully submitted



Dawn MacLeod

Interim Board Clerk

Approval: Becky Valenti Date: 5-6-14
Becky Valenti, Secretary