

**APPROVED
MINUTES
BOARD OF EDUCATION
April 6, 2016**

PLACE:

Darien Board of Education
Meeting Room
7:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Harman, Chair; Mesdames Hagerty-Ross, Stein and Sullivan; and Messrs. Burke, Dineen, and Martens.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mesdames McNamara and Zuro.

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Dr. Dan Brenner, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Susie DaSilva, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Ms. Shirley Klein, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services; Mr. Michael Feeney, Director of Finance and Operations; Ms. Marjorie Cion, Director of Human Resources.

VISITORS:

Approximately 20.

CALL TO ORDER.

Mr. Harman called the meeting to order at 7:44 p.m. The next Regular BOE meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 26, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. in the Darien High School Auditorium.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Mr. Harman said that the budget was still in the process and there would be a Board of Finance meeting on April 7th about the Operating Budget and the Capital Plan. The RTM is scheduled to vote on the final budget on May 9th.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Lois Schneider, Maywood Rd., Vice Chair of the RTM Education Committee, came forward to speak about the recent RTM Education meeting that had taken place on April 5th. She said that at the last RTM Education meeting, the sense of the Committee was that they did not support the \$1 million dollar allocation for the cafeteria project. This does not mean that the RTM Education Committee does not support changes in the cafeteria, but they do not support having the \$1 million dollars in the budget at this point.

Personally, Ms. Schneider said that she found it very difficult to make comments to the Board about the issue since she had not heard any of the discussion of the issue. The way that the current process is set up, the RTM Education Committee will only have this opportunity to make comments before the BOE votes on the matter. She said she would rather hear the BOE's discussion and comments so she could ask relevant questions instead of making comments now.

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Ms. Schneider then said the Committee looks forward to discussing the issue and understanding more about the Board's thoughts on the conversations. She said that the Board may not have been formally notified of the upcoming meeting with the RTM Education Committee that has been scheduled for May 2nd at 8:00 p.m. Ms. Schneider said that she believed the room assigned for the meeting in Town Hall may be too small, so she would be back in touch with the BOE about the actual room assignment.

Mr. Jack Davis, Greenwood Ave., Chair of the RTM F&B Committee, said that he was present to speak about the cafeteria. He said that the recent facility tour was not a reflection of the Board or the administration, but things have changed. The RTM F&B will be receiving a report from the shuffle committee and said that it was known that the expenses that occurred during the shuffle were higher than expected. He added that there were certain options available.

Mr. Davis said that F&B wants to do this correctly and he believes that is true of the Board of Finance also. He then listed some of the options such as an extension of the cafeteria, or possibly adding classrooms. At the present time, there are three high density projects that are being presented to the Town. The Town learned from Kensett, despite the fact that they were told the project will not add any students to the enrollment, there were students coming into the District. He asked if the Board had already figured out the break even number and referred to the statement that Dr. Brenner had made at an earlier date about how it was easier to absorb students at the high school than it was at the elementary schools. Mr. Davis asked how many more pods there were that could be converted to classrooms and how many more students the District could take in before the Board needs to add more classrooms. If the Board chooses not to add classrooms at this time, Mr. Davis wished to know if the extension would allow the Board to add classrooms in the future. These are the considerations that F&B were asking about. This is not a reflection on the Board, but the F&B Committee simply wants to do this right.

Mr. Davis said that he did not think this would affect the timetable. If an appropriation is filed early, then an RFP can be prepared and education specs can be prepared. If a good analysis takes six months, the Board would be back before the BOF in October or November and in January, the F&B would be able to vote on it.

Mr. Davis pointed out that when the presentation for the project was made to the BOF, there were two members who were outspoken against the project. He said that as it stands, the F&B would not support the \$1 million dollar proposal. The F&B Committee wants to work together with the BOE on this. Mr. Davis said that the last thing that he would want to see is the project not be approved by the RTM Education Committee and the RTM F&B Committee because this would mean that it would not likely be able to make it through the full RTM. He encouraged the Board to take their time and withdraw the request at this time. It will be important to work together to get the project right for the school system.

Mr. Davis suggested that if other projects came along, that the Board not wait for the budget cycle to start it. If the new projects are brought forward sooner, then everyone can consider them and address them sooner.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT.

Dr. Brenner said that he would pass on his comments at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

March 22, 2016 Special Meeting

- ** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 22, 2016 SPECIAL MEETING.**
- ** MR. DINEEN SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 22, 2016 SPECIAL MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH SIX IN FAVOR (HARMAN, HAGERTY-ROSS, STEIN, BURKE, MARTENS AND DINEEN) AND ONE ABSTENTION (SULLIVAN).**

March 22, 2016 Regular Meeting

- ** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 22, 2016 REGULAR MEETING.**
- ** MR. DINEEN SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 22, 2016 REGULAR MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH SIX IN FAVOR ((HARMAN, HAGERTY-ROSS, STEIN, BURKE, MARTENS AND DINEEN) AND ONE ABSTENTION (SULLIVAN).**

March 31, 2016 Special Meeting

- ** MS. STEIN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 31, 2016 SPECIAL MEETING.**
- ** MS. SULLIVAN SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 31, 2016 SPECIAL MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH FOUR IN FAVOR (HARMAN, SULLIVAN, STEIN AND BURKE) AND THREE ABSTENTIONS (HAGERTY-ROSS, DINEEN AND MARTENS).**

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no reports at this time.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS

A. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACCEPTANCE OF CONTEMPLATED GIFT FROM BOYS' LACROSSE BOOSTER GROUP. (File #2485)

Dr. Brenner said that there was a contemplated gift from the Boys' Lacrosse Booster Group for a golf cart to transport equipment. It is not a cart that will be exclusively used by the Boys' Lacrosse Group, but could be used by anyone using the upper oval.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Who is this organization?** (Dr. Brenner said that he did not know and had assumed it was a standing group.) b) **Are these funds part of the Contemplated Gift from Darien High School Boys Lacrosse Parent Group?** (Dr. Brenner replied that these were different funds and not part of the DHS Boys Lacrosse group. Those funds were appropriated for the filming of the games and the gloves. He had assumed it was the same group and did not realize it was a different group. He suggested that the item be tabled so he could obtain more information on this group.) c) **Are there also insurance implications? Will that be covered by the gift?** (Dr. Brenner said that the High School already has two golf carts and they are covered.) d) **There have been several iterations of lacrosse groups. The Board needs some clarification especially since there are only two checks involved. Having only two**

donors is another issue. (Dr. Brenner apologized again for not having all the information available. He said that he would check in to this and get back to the Board.)

B. UPDATE ON HIGH SCHOOL LAB PILOT COURSE.

Principal Dunn came forward to give an overview of the program. She narrated a PowerPoint presentation (File #2486) including the students; the teachers; the model; instructions in the lab along with strengths and challenges for the students.

Board comments and questions and Administration's responses: a) **How were the students selected? It has to be a representative sample.** (Ms. Dunn explained that the students were the ones who were in the class that were struggling because their grades were below average.) b) **Was this open to everyone who wanted to attend?** (Ms. Dunn said that unfortunately, only the students who were free during the lab period were able to participate. This may change in the future. Dr. Brenner said that the results were similar to the ones he saw at his former District. The students that were failing were being pulled through and finding success. The students are getting three to four additional periods of support. It's not for every student and not for every subject area. It appears to be providing a nice option.)

Principal Dunn continued her presentation by listing the next steps that the school will take in this program.

Board comments and questions and Administration's responses: a) **It sounds like a very worthwhile program. If you have a student who is struggling and eligible for a lab but there is a conflict with an elective, how will you reconcile this?** (Ms. Dunn said that not every student who faces some challenges or bumps in the road is going to need the lab. The research labs and the teachers are still available for the students both before and after school. But there will be some students who will have to choose between the elective and the lab if the real academic need is going to impact all the electives. The students will need some balance in their days and the administration will work on that. Dr. Brenner added that the team taught model would also be available. The labs are the highest level of support and there are some dramatic results because of the intensity. So, there is a continuum of support.) b) **I was able to get some of the feedback from some of the parents in the lab taught class and there were concerns about the disconnect between the teacher in the lab and the teacher in the classroom. The different classes were at different stages in the book. What kind of consideration has been given to the pacing and the testing? One lab teacher was having difficulty understanding where the classroom teacher was coming from. Has there been any overall thought in the Social Studies Department about how the curriculum is delivered?** (Principal Dunn said that when the schedules are implemented, the number of teachers giving instruction in a subject area would decrease, so there would be more continuity. She gave the details of how the scheduling with the teacher assignments would be done.) c) **There has been concern among the Board members because there are so many different teachers teaching Western Civ across different grades. How does a teacher handle instructing a 12th grade class followed by a 9th grade class?** (Principal Dunn said that it had to do with teacher preparation.) d) **How subject specific is this? Can we give them a mini-lab or a beginners lab because some of these are study skills? Can this be replicated over and over again rather than done just on the edges?** (Principal Dunn said that the reading and study skills course at the high school is an excellent resource but it is a separate course. However, the issue is pacing for content for the various classes.) e) **But you can see the students who are getting the content and others who aren't? Are we offering them mini-labs?** (Dr. Brenner said that in a perfect world and the model was up and running, there may be some fluidity with the lab. He gave a potential example of a student who was struggling in Chemistry dropping into a lab and once the student's grade came up, the student could stop attending the lab. Right now the focus is on the high end strugglers. It could be

possible, but the school is not there yet. That's the goal.) f) **There are lessons to be learned from the pilot program.** (Dr. Brenner said that part of the plan is that it will take place in four subject areas, which is more than what has been added in the past. Principal Dunn said that what the staff was seeing with this model was success.) g) **How are the students being selected or become eligible and is there a commitment for the students?** (Principal Dunn said that the staff had reviewed the grades for the first semester students who had a C- grade or below. Then the teachers' and students' schedules were compared. The administration reached out to the students' families and some families chose not to participate. Other students' schedules did not allow them to participate.)

C. RECOMMENDATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON ESTABLISHING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION DATE. (File #2487)

Dr. Brenner said that the administration was recommending Thursday, June 16th as the graduation date.

**** MS. SULLIVAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THURSDAY, JUNE 16TH AS THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION DATE.**

**** MR. DINEEN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

D. UPDATE, DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON CAPITAL PROJECT SPECIFIC TO HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA.

Dr. Brenner said that on the 31st there had been a discussion about the steps to facilitate the DHS cafeteria. The Board could move forward with the \$1 million dollar Capital budget request for the cafeteria or have architects do a study of the various options with their costs. One option would be a build out of an extension; the second option would be the extension and a gut rehab of the interior space; and the third option might be having classroom space above cafeteria area. This would involve an architect, a structural engineer and a cost estimator. This type of project would have to go out to bid via an RFP. Dr. Brenner then gave a brief overview of the various steps that the Board would have to take. He said that realistically, the Board should not expect to have a study completed before mid-October. There were some concerns that the Board could end up doing the study but end up in the exact same place as they are today.

From the Administration's perspective, it will remain as a Priority 1. He added that the Administration's recommendation for more space would stand, but pointed out that what it looks like and what it will cost are variables.

Mr. Harman said that there had been a discussion with the BOF about this project during the previous week. He said that it appears that the need for the space was clear, but the underlying concern is whether there are other alternatives than just the cafeteria.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **My understanding was that the need for a cafeteria expansion was identified as a high priority and the BOF seems to agree. However, there is concern that the project be done correctly rather than having the project done expediently. I would rather move forward and get the expansion done.** b) **I have six reasons why this needs to be done. First of all, we have to do it. This has to be done by 2018-19. In 17 years as an elected official, when things are removed from the budget, they are hard to get back into the budget. Secondly, we have often fallen prey to analysis paralysis. I don't want this to become another chess piece that gets moved around the board,**

but in reality, doesn't move at all. Thirdly, the off cycle concept is not one that has been proven to work for educational spending for anything as important as this. I'm not saying it won't work or that I'm not willing to try it on something else, but not on this project which has to be done, I'm not willing to work on it off cycle. Fourthly, comparing this to the Shuffle and all of the things that happened is quite honestly wrong. 63% of the Town voted against the Shuffle but the RTM did it anyway. The Board of Education wasn't really part of that and the Board of Education did not mismanage our funding for the project. The Board will not mismanage future funds for projects. One of the reasons that 63% of the Town did not vote in favor of the Shuffle was because they were afraid if there was overspending on this building, the money would be taken away from educational spending. I don't want to see that happen. I believe that we need to move this forward. Finally, having met with F&B, I got the very distinct feeling that there were some members who were just not in favor of the project. They definitely have the right to their questions and concerns. I believe that we are in favor. I believe it is our budget and that we will spend the \$1 million dollars on renovating the cafeteria and I believe that we should keep it in our budget so that we are sure to complete the project. c) I think those were a lot of valid points. I am okay with pulling it with the understanding that we can get it done in time. I think timing is the biggest issue. The way that I see it is that there may be some analysis paralysis but in the past we have valued engineered things and not built enough. I think this will give us a little bit of space. We have the largest 6th grade class coming in and when they hit the high school, we may need even more classrooms than what the locker pods expansion allows for. This actually gives us a chance to catch our breath and decide maybe to do more. It may be a higher price tag, but that's where I'm coming from. d) I'm in agreement at this time for keeping the project in, but also taking the time to look at other alternatives, provided that we can keep the project on track. As has been mentioned, there are large classes coming in and we need to look at not just space for the cafeteria but also think about after cafeteria hours, can that space be converted into classrooms with moveable walls. Is there an option to go above the cafeteria and utilize that space without aesthetically changing the building or what the goal was in having the green space up there. I think we've done a lot of studies including Milone and MacBroom, and the point now is designing the space that we need and making it functional space. e) I don't want to answer for the Board of Finance, but the sense that I got was that if the BOE did need something bigger down the road, the Board won't have the chance to go and ask for more funds. If the Board thinks that the project needs to be bigger, the Board should pull it and present the larger project. We know that the need is there for a larger cafeteria, but does the Board want to look at the option to add more or not. f) I have two kids that stand up at lunch sometimes, so I understand the need completely. I think that is what I am hearing is the feeling that both the Town and the BOE have done which in retrospect the feeling that more work should have gone into it beforehand. It doesn't matter whether it is true or not, because the feeling is there. That's what I am hearing other people say when we are converting locker pods. The high school is relatively new and we're already making a fair amount of changes. Does that mean that the original design was wrong? So, now people are second guessing all the decisions that have been made in the past and that seems to be coming into this decision. Is this another decision that perhaps we are making too quickly. That being said, personally I feel that another study that comes out in October will cost us \$100,000 and we're going to go "Let's do this like we said." I fully expect that to happen. Having said that, perhaps there is something in between those conceptual ideas that could be brought to the table with less of a price tag and less of assurance of what could be built. At least it would give the community the opportunity to seek new ideas. Personally, I feel that space is so limited and unconnected to the rest of the school, I don't think we are going to come up with anything. However, people want to feel that we have looked at all the options, so if we outgrow it in two or three years from now, people don't say "See, I told you so. You railroaded this through." So the end result is we should explore something less than a full blown architectural study and consider maybe three or four concepts of what you can do in terms of

flexible space and these types of things without being fully costed out. You might end up with a project that is \$2 million dollars but at least it's a project that everyone says "Hey, not only do we get this, but we also get this and this." g) What would another study get us that we don't already know? Will this study be like another Milone and MacBroom report where we spend \$60,000 and what do we get out of it? Or are we talking moving to a design phase where Principal Dunn knows what we need and we all know there's a sixth grade bubble coming up. Do we start to design a space around that which includes a flexible addition that includes a renovation of the cafeteria and possible space above it. I think we have to distinguish between a study and what \$100,000 will get us. (Dr. Brenner said that he made a poor choice of words. The word "study" that was being used is actually a cost analysis. This is a more precise look at what the costs would be and what would be purchased for those costs. This is not a question of whether or not the space is needed. We've established that and we are not paying anyone to come back and tell us that again. This would be an opportunity to see what the cost would be so that if the rehab required taking the cafeteria down to the slab and we decided to spray the new ceiling with acoustic tile to deaden the sound. Then we make a bump out and that starts with a slab and what the cost would be. Currently, the figure was done on a square footage analysis. What you need is not a design phase with add alternates, but a conceptual look at some renderings that has a cost analysis that is more precise than what the Board currently has. It is not a final cost estimate but will give the Board what kind of cost would be generated with these factors. You would also get an analysis of the roof and whether or not it could support classrooms on top. The structural engineer will come in and tell you what it would cost to build out classrooms based on the current architecture of the building. If in fact, it can't support that space, they would tell you what it would cost to bring in the steel to reinforce it and they'll make up a cost estimate for that. Those are the kinds of things that would be done and it is a real study because the professionals have to come in to do that. But you will end up with more specifics. When you ask them what they based it on, they will be able to give you the specific generalities that are involved with the cost. They will do it based on what we ask them to do. They will present a general design with options and costs. It will not be the final design. Dr. Brenner said that adding four classrooms in the area was not space that would be misused. The question is how valuable is it to the Board. Do we need it right this moment? Will there be a shift to change the classrooms back to locker pods? That is what the questions are.) h) **But if I heard the public correctly, that's our next step. The hang up is the fact that that Board keeps talking about the need for \$1 million dollars for an addition to the cafeteria. What we need to say is, "How many locker pods are left?" , " How many locker pods can we convert?" , "Can that addition be two classrooms with moveable walls? Is that based on the fact that we'll need classrooms in 2017, we'll need classrooms in 2018, we'll need classrooms in 2019? The public comments that I'm hearing from the public is that they are looking for a plan from us that the \$1 million, the \$1.5 million, the \$2 million that we're going to spend is going to carry us through 5 or 10 years and we're going to build it correctly. If it involves renovating the cafeteria, that's fine. We need to move beyond the cafeteria concept because we need more space. How do we make it the most effective space and something that will take us into the next 5 + years.** i) **We can get all hung up in the sky's the limit and then things get stalled and things don't happen. And then we end up just deciding to do the addition.** j) **I guess it comes down to do we trust everything that we are being told. The Board of Finance has said that they'll pay for it but that they are not comfortable with the way that we're doing it now. I felt confident after our meeting with the Board of Finance and some of the RTM. The dollars are all coming from the same place. I understand the idea of the placeholder so that people understand that the Board of Education is behind the project. We've all acknowledged that this needs to happen. It's just a matter of doing it.** (Dr. Brenner said that there was an important piece that needed to be considered. When the original project was discussed, we were talking about the cafeteria and what has complicated the matter is the idea of the classrooms. Doing an architectural study as it applies to the cafeteria and asking a structural engineer to see if there would be a possibility down the road would be reasonable. Dr. Brenner said that the Board went with the original idea of expanding the cafeteria. There are

some unknowns, including some new developments. Having the knowledge of what could be future classrooms is valuable. But the Board literally put the two projects of the storage area and the cafeteria up because they were stand alone projects that would not impact the rest. It was the Board of Finance that came to the BOE that raised the question of more classrooms. And at that moment, it sounded great. Dr. Brenner said that he could always use more classrooms, but in reality, the BOE did not ask for more classrooms because they didn't think they needed it. Part of that is that the District is headed towards an initiative where the school is taking back computer labs and reclaiming those spaces for classrooms. That will allow the high school to expand without having to build. That's part of the one to one tradeoff. He encouraged the Board to refocus. Whether or not they spent the \$1 million or not, he thought the conversation should be around cafeteria and possibly doing a "substudy" on the classrooms, which could be done at a later date.) k) **One point I want to highlight is that regardless of the two options, timing wise, they still hit the deadline of October 2018.** (Dr. Brenner agreed and said that if this could be done in a timely way, which he believed could be done, and the Board trusts that it could be done off cycle and it is done by February, then the District can go out to bid in 2017.) l) **I haven't had 17 years, but I have had 10 years on the Board of Education. There is a similarity to the Shuffle A price was set on the Shuffle and then the Building Committee, which I was part of had to work to meet that price. So things were value engineered out, they simply were never included. That's the similarity between this project and the Shuffle. Comments have been made about the Shuffle and the value engineering and how people have to be responsible for that and how things have to go back to the Board of Ed. The things that were affecting this building were never included in the Shuffle. They were not part of the price of the building. They were taken out before we even got to the table as a Building Committee. The BOE actually asked for those various items to be looked at but the price that was set by the Selectmen and the BOF couldn't include those because what they wanted to build at the Senior Center. The key here is that we are asking for \$1 million dollars. So, if we found out that we had a better option to take out the slab and take out other things, but it would cost \$1.2 million dollars, we'd be stuck with \$1 million and would have to go back. Then everyone would be saying that it would look like the Shuffle and they would turn it down. The points that were raised earlier were very good. I'm disappointed that we didn't get to talk to RTM Education before we had this discussion. Secondly, I think that F&B got too far ahead of the BOE along with everybody in the Town on this project and the Board was not able to defend it properly. Decisions have been made that have taken it out of our hands. There are no "ifs", "ands" or "buts" about this project. It has to be done. What we are hearing is that we don't have the support. I don't want to lose the project. The problem is whether the BOE can trust the BOF, F&B and the Education Committees not only to back us, but to champion the project, if we say we will pull it for now and when Dr. Brenner comes back to the BOE and makes a decision that it will be included in the capital projects or how the cafeteria will be done, or if there are classrooms on top, or whatever; then the BOE will have an ironclad promise from those three groups that they will stand behind the BOE and say, "We need this done." In the 10 years that I've been on the BOE, that's never happened in most instances. We've had backing from the Education Committee and F&B, but not the BOF. We've never had the backing from the BOF, we've always been on our own. We need that backing. What I am hearing is that the BOE could leave it in the plan, and the BOF could pull it out. Or if it goes to the RTM, it won't pass. Then we don't have it. If it is taken out now and deferred; it's not being cancelled, but deferring it, the BOE needs to make sure that the BOF, F&B and the Education Committee comes with the BOE as a group when the project reaches the RTM floor in the off cycle and gets it passed. That's a conversation that the BOE has to have with those three groups, but the BOE needs to make a decision about this tonight. m) I understand those comments and I care a lot about the politics and trust, but our job is to focus on the students. I can't worry about the machinations of the RTM or the Education Committee, both of which I used to be on. Our Superintendent is telling us that we need this cafeteria and frankly I don't want to defer this. The RTM may say that they won't give us the money**

because they say they don't trust us or whatever they think that they will do, but as a Board, we have a Superintendent that says we need this project and I don't want to defer this. n) My concern is that if we were to move forward there are two opportunities for this project to be turned down and then the Board would be back to Square Zero as opposed to having an alternative to look at a design if needed. o) Regarding the \$1 million dollars, when we hired an architect, we could instruct them to take a look at the slab and estimate the cost of pulling it up and doing the other things that we need to be done. In other words, voting for the \$1 million dollars does not mean that we are not negating Option A in the plan of the big size bump out. (Dr. Brenner explained that the \$1 million dollars was based on a square footage number for the bond. It does not speak at all to what might be in the room. There's been some talk about whether it includes the furniture. It doesn't speak at all to how it might be designed. It could come in at less than \$1 million dollars. Depending on the design, it could come in at significantly more. That is what some of the BOF and F&B members are concerned about. \$1 million dollars will not get you into a gut rehab. You may need more to finish the bump out and potentially get less. Much of it is unknown because of the bidding process.) p) **I'm trying to address the concerns of the other Board members. Just to make sure, voting to keep the \$1 million dollars in isn't voting to address this problem in a singular perspective. We will be talking to the architect, we will be soliciting bids and so on.** (Dr. Brenner agreed that all those normal things would be happening and that the Board could with a number and just work off that number similar to what was mentioned before. The design could be fitted in to the \$1 million dollars. If you go with a design that is more than \$1 million dollars, then you potentially will have to come back and say that you need more funds. That's where the rubber hits the pavement on this conversation when you front load the \$1 million and there are concerns that there are not enough details for that \$1. million dollars or you go ahead with your \$1 million and you get your detail and if you need more, you come back. Which direction does the Board want to move in. I don't have the history that the folks at this table have. However, it seems that people typically did not go back to get more money, they value engineered out from the dollar figure. There may be a sense of politic around mismanagement and "You asked for \$1 million. What do you mean, you need more? If you managed this correctly, you would have been able to do it with the \$1 million dollars." That's the balance that you are struggling with.) q) **But we have been assured that they want to fund what is best. Then you take the \$1 million dollars and move forward and if you need more, you come back.** (Dr. Brenner explained that he was not weighing in on the project, but simply illustrating that this was the decision the Board was making.) r) **But that's where we are ahead of ourselves because we are focused on this \$1 million dollar number and it's tied to the cafeteria, which we know we need. But we haven't said that within that \$1 million dollars, should it be the renovation and removal of a slab and will the bump out look a little different because we are adding more seating.** (Dr. Brenner agreed that they would immediately gain more space from putting everything on grade and losing the walls. There will also be flexibility inside of the room. But beyond that, it's all architectural design in terms of how many square feet on the slab vs. the number of seats in a tier.) s) **We wouldn't know the answer until the RTM vote anyway.**

**** MS. STEIN MOVED TO DEFER THE APPROVED CAPITAL PROJECT FOR THE DHS CAFETERIA UNTIL THE COMPLETION OF AN ARCHITECTURAL STUDY.**

**** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS SECONDED.**

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Does the Board have to authorize the \$100,000 for the RFP for the study?** (Mr. Harman replied that funding for the study would be the second step.) b) **I guess the question is whether we think the cost of the study would be \$100,000.** (Dr. Brenner said that the two conversations he had with separate architectural firms seemed to suggest that the Board could get the study done for under \$100,000.) c) **Is this a conversation that we need to have with the BOF about how this would be funded and whether it would be an operating fund or a Capital item?**

**** THE MOTION TO DEFER THE APPROVED CAPITAL PROJECT FOR THE DHS CAFETERIA UNTIL THE COMPLETION OF AN ARCHITECTURAL STUDY PASSED WITH FOUR IN FAVOR (STEIN, HAGERTY-ROSS, DINEEN, AND HARMAN) AND THREE AGAINST (SULLIVAN, MARTENS, AND BURKE).**

Ms. Hagerty-Ross said for the record that there would be further discussion with F&B and Board of Finance to move forward. She said that the Board was trusting the system. Discussion followed.

Dr. Brenner asked if the Board had to authorize the \$100,000 for the RFP for the study. He said that in order to do the timeline, it needed to be considered. Mr. Feeney said that a Building Committee would need to be established to do that. Mr. Harman said that there would be a discussion the following day with the BOF and he was not sure if that would give the BOE any authorization. Dr. Brenner said that he would include this on the next agenda.

E. FIRST READING AND DISCUSSION OF 2017-18 SCHOOL CALENDAR. (File #2488)

Dr. Brenner encouraged the Board not to amend the calendar from the State of Connecticut Department of Education other than adjusting the February break. He said that there were two draft calendars with the two options; one for a four day break as opposed to the second with a full week off for the February break. There is legal opinion that supports taking the four flex days and put them in for the February break. He said that he was only looking for guidance on this.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **This is not changing the Professional Development days or anything else?** (Dr. Brenner replied that the Professional Development days hadn't been scheduled yet and that was a separate issue to the calendar scheduling.) b) **But when the Board discussed the calendar previously, one of the goals was to make sure that the administration had the right amount of Professional Development days included.** (Dr. Brenner stated that the Professional Development days would be included, so this is not looking to cut out anything educationally.) c) **What happens the following year?** (Dr. Brenner said that the following year, the schedule would shift back. What makes this unique is the language in the law that suggests that the District does not need the full week. But the District does not need the full week this year because the break falls adjacent to the February legal holiday. You are only taking four days.) d) **But what is the date that the State tells us we have to take off?** (Dr. Brenner said that the State requires the 16th. Greenwich and New Canaan are both taking the 16th and the 19th.) e) **What about Columbus Day?** (We're only talking about February break.) f) **Years ago, this was discussed. We tried to take a shorter break because the kids in the AP classes would get more time in the classroom. What ended up happening is that in Darien there is a loving of skiing and so people want the full week off.** g) **But a few years ago, we asked people if they wanted to take out April or if they wanted to take out February. It was a dead split.** h) **It is basically a six day break or a week and one day break.** i) **If we opt to do it now, next year is an off year, so we go back to the long weekend. So we're telling people here's a week and then telling them we're back to the long weekend. We just started and this is the first year with no February break and then the second year, we have a February break and then the following year, no February break. I think it's important to stay consistent.** j) **We have a loophole next year, but it seems crazy to do what New Canaan and Greenwich are doing in my opinion.** k) **But next year, Greenwich is taking the full week anyway, right?** (Dr. Brenner said that Greenwich would be taking the full week. Greenwich has basically called the State's bluff.) l) **Is there any indication that the State will pull this back again or is this thing here to stay?** (Dr. Brenner said there's been a lot of noise and there have been a lot of

people speaking at the State level basically saying that this was a silly place to put one's foot down and give us back our autonomy. There's been no indication that there's been a change. Dr. Brenner said that he had not heard anything about repercussions. From a Superintendent's perspective, he would be working anyway. The goal is to offer the Board the chance to do what the community wants. He said that he believes that this is cultural to the various communities.) m) **Didn't we do a survey last time?** n) **We could ask Dr. Brenner to put out the two calendars and we could go to our CDSP.** (Dr. Brenner said that no matter what the Board decided, there would be a group of people who would not be happy. He added that it would have been easier to tell you this didn't exist, but New Canaan has clearly done this, Greenwich has done this and now Westport has done this. I didn't want to leave it out there like it wasn't possible.) o) **If we go to the full week, where do those days come from? Will graduation be pushed out or are there other days?** (Dr. Brenner said that there would be give backs because there are 180 days. You would lose three flex days.) p) **Graduation would be pushed out three days?** (Yes. Dr. Brenner said that he was just looking for consensus.) q) **I think we should leave it short and be consistent.** (Dr. Brenner said that he would create a calendar and bring it forward to the Board.

F. UPDATE ON FEEDBACK FROM TRANSPORTATION SURVEY. (File #2489)

Mr. Feeney said that a transportation survey has been done to create a transportation baseline. He then gave an overview of the responses and displayed various types of charts showing the final responses.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Regarding the courtesy of the driver, is it a result of the parents speaking to the driver or what the students report? That needs to be improved. There's no reason for the students not to be courteous to the bus driver.** (Mr. Feeney agreed.) b) **From what I understand, there are some routes that area crowded and others that appear to be underutilized. Maybe next year we can address that.** (Mr. Feeney said that this had been considered, but would lead to a more complicated survey.) c) **Can we do it in a general sense just to find out whether 75% of our riders are crowded on the bus or it's only 10%.** (Dr. Brenner said that the administration already knows that and could identify which buses were crowded. It had to do with the initial problems at the beginning of the year with assigning the routes. One of the goals was to balance the buses better. He said that a question similar to "Is the bus crowded?" could be asked in the next survey. Parents have been very forthcoming when the buses are crowded and we made some decisions when we needed this. Some of the buses are crowded and we need to do better next year.) d) **We have cameras on the buses.** (Dr. Brenner said that this was correct. The administration also has counts so they know how many students are on the bus. Mr. Feeney said that they were in touch with the administrators with feedback. It will result in an efficiency study to balance the bus route better.) e) **The feedback that I hear is that the buses were crowded and the routes do not make sense. We need to spend some time on the routes. The kids are sitting on the bus for way too long and even the kids know the routes make no sense.** (Dr. Brenner said that the District had gotten off to a late start last year. The administration needs to built the routes much earlier. He said it was most likely his first big SNAFU. However, there was a bit of a large turnover on July 1st last year and no one knew quite what they were doing. We are keeping our eyes on it for next year.) f) **This was a relatively simple survey for parents. It does add value. Should this be done every year?** (Dr. Brenner said that it could be done, but not too close to the beginning of the year. A survey had never been done before. It was actually done as a result of a conversation with a parent. The parent pointed out that when a group is delivering a service, it is always good to do a survey to see how satisfied people are with the service. Busing is a service. Dr. Brenner said that he did not think that there would be much of a change now, but come September, there should be some improvement because of better planning.) g) **I like the fact that it was tied back to the bus numbers because it provided some information.**

G. FURTHER DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON PROPOSED RECOMMENDED REVISIONS TO BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICIES.

Dr. Brenner asked that this be tabled due to some changes that need to be made.

ACTION ITEMS

PERSONNEL ITEMS

- **Appointments**
- **Resignations/Retirements**

Ms. Cion presented the recommended personnel appointments and retirements to the Board. (File #2490)

**** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS MOVED TO APPROVE THE PERSONNEL ITEMS AS PRESENTED.**

**** MR. DINEEN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Wendy Ward, Stanley Road, came forward to address the Board. She said that she was one of the 600 respondents on the survey. She commented that something that was not included on the survey but that she wished was included were the numerous problems with poor choices by the students on the bus. This has become such a problem for her children that they don't take the bus anymore. An idea like the Safety Patrol for the elementary school students tends to give those students the opportunity to boss other kids around. She suggested that they may want to ask about the emotion safety because there are many poor choices made on the bus.

Ms. Tara Ochman, Mansfield Avenue, came forward and said she had been commenting on the Capital Budget for at least seven years. She said the \$1 million dollar build out was one of the cheaper projects coming down the pike. Work on the major trust issues now because the big projects need to be done that will be much more expensive. If the Town boards can get clear on it, it will be a much smoother process.

Mr. Young-Sup Lee, Middlesex Road, came forward to address the Board. He said that he was a new RTM Member and also a member of the Education Committee. Mr. Lee said that his children had graduated from the District, so he had no immediate vested interest other than as a taxpayer. He said that he wished to remind the Board that they should not let the fear of Analysis Paralysis turn into No Analysis. The Board is headed towards getting some analysis done. Mr. Lee said that the Board would have the best chance of getting his support if he saw that they spent 110% on something fully vetted and studied rather than something that was only 90% and something that the Board just happened to luck out and get right. He said that he has asked Principal Dunn if there had been any feedback from the students. Principal Dunn told him that they had not, but knew for a fact that the students would love any kind of expansion. Mr. Lee said that while he believes that, there should be feedback from the students, the cafeteria staff, custodians and the teachers because it would be useful.

Dr. Brenner said that he was a big believer of collaboration and the question is what parts of the project will have collaboration. He said in terms of handling the bill, collaboration is critical, but the administration needs

to handle the design phase of projects. When people are involved in decision making, it is important to listen to what is being said.

Mr. Lee said that he had gotten feedback from some anonymous former students. They have a different view of the extent of the congestion rather than the adults have. He added that a current student has a good idea as to alleviating some of the congestion right now.

Ms. Lois Schneider, Maywood Road, came forward and said that she wanted to thank everyone for considering the views. She said that it was important to remember that these are discussions at the Education Committee meetings. The Education Committee is not telling the BOE what to do. There's a very fine line there and Ms. Schneider said that the Education Committee leaders need to make sure that they are all coming from the same page. The responsibility lies with the BOE, not the Education Committee. The Education Committee has the task of vetting the funding or telling the BOE where they don't agree. She said that she felt good about working together, wants to be on the same page and hoped to accomplish that on May 2nd. It's good for the Town if the groups are all working together. She thanked the Board for letting her speak.

Mr. Harman pointed out that the Board was putting its trust in the RTM and the Board of Finance.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. DINEEN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Burke and Kathrine Stein, Board Members
(in absence of Sarah S. Zuro, Secretary)