

A Public Hearing was held Tuesday, March 27 2018 at Woodbury Middle School, 67 Washington Ave., Woodbury CT.

Present: Board members: Michael Devine, Carol Ann Brown, John Chapman, George Bauer, Maryanne Van Aken, Janet Morgan. Also in attendance were Dr. Anna Cutaia, Michael Rafferty, Bill Nemecek, Susan Ruddock, Sharon Gomes, Chrissy Fensore, Kim Culkin, Jodie Roden, Suzi Greene, Pam Sordi, Moderator Lou DeLuca, and approximately 12 members of the community and BOE clerk, Natascha Schwartz.
Missing: Dave Lampart, Pam Zmek, John Chapman, George Bauer.

Ms. Morgan called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Morgan appointed Woodbury Town Moderator, Lou DeLuca, to serve as moderator for the public hearing. He appointed BOE Secretary, Ms. Brown, to serve as the meeting clerk.

Mr. DeLuca read the following call: To present and receive questions about the Regional School District 14 Superintendent's proposed budget for 2018-2019. He turned the presentation over to Dr. Anna.

Dr. Anna gave the highlights of the recommended budget presentation. The total recommended budget is \$34,137,402. She noted that the budget, represents a 2.37% increase.

Dr. Anna's key messages were the following:

Top 5 improvements 2014-2019 (Top 5 in 5):

- 81% of curriculum/courses written and approved.
- 100% transition services for children have been bookended in our district. (Pre K & 18-21)
- Focused social emotional programming and training delivered across the district.
- Human Resources helped realize efficiencies and maximized staffing. (reduction of 21.05 full time employees while still adding courses and programming)
- 60.5% of the staff will have participated in the Region 14 Teacher Leadership Academy.

She went on to stress that the 1st 24 slides of the presentation represent all of the great things that have been realized in the past year in Region 14 and she challenged the audience members to take 3 celebrations from the slides and carry those positive points to the community.

Dr. Anna advised that as promised, last year's plan has been carried over to this year's budget proposal to include:

- Elementary Science Labs
- Middle School Culinary
- K-8 Science Kits
- Musical Instruments repository

BES: As of March 1st there are currently 44 students in grade 1 which will be going to 2nd grade, representing 2 sections of 22 students per section. The max class size for K-2 is 23 students. Demographers have projected that we will have 49 2nd graders in Bethlehem for next year. That would mean that we would need 5 more children to move into the Bethlehem district as 2nd graders, which would seem quite rare. For this reason the strategy for BES was not to budget for a 3rd section for 2nd grade. Dr. Anna did state publicly that if this were to come to fruition, then the Region is committed to adding a 3rd section.

WMS: Dr. Anna advised that she and the leadership team were looking for decreases or efficiencies, so instead of continuing with STEAM, it has been embedded into the new Math and Science curricula, thereby having the opportunity of adding Culinary. It is important to note that there is no budgetary impact by doing this.

Program improvements:

The leadership team is committed to focus more on student support services in health: social emotional and mental health. The region will be moving to a school counselor from Prek-12 with a district wide social worker to work with families off hours as needed. Moving to a school counseling program consists of a broader scope of services, providing early skill development and detection of emerging deficits.

The new structure will be as follows:

School Counselor
District Social worker
Instructional Leader Support Services

Dr. Anna wanted to also discuss test scores. She gave an example of the typical 8th grader taking ELA and Math. That student would have experienced 3 different programs over the course of his/her schooling and none of those programs were based on curriculum. The region is addressing the problem in a sustainable way with having proper curriculum.

Dr. Anna advised that she has listened to the parents and is happy to announce that the region will be offering both Spanish along with French in 8th Grade and we will offer one years' worth of work for one credit.

Mr. DeLuca opened the floor for public comment:

Roberta Zulpa of Woodbury asked why the region has decided to remove a Media Specialist position at BES. She is concerned that there will be a lack of support especially as it relates to I.T. issues with Chromebooks.

Dr. Anna answered that BES has 12 sections, and direct instruction doesn't warrant a full time Media Specialist in order to receive the necessary support. The Instructional Leader for Tech Integration will be handling a lot of these issues along with the I.T. dept. The region did an analysis to make sure there that will be enough coverage to support the students.

Diane McLeod of Woodbury had a few questions:

- 1) In Dr. Anna's previous budget presentation she discussed buckets and that Art would be looked at in in 4th year and where are we with that?

Dr. Anna answered that we are addressing art as a whole. The new music curriculum will be presented to the Board of Education on April 9th. There are also revamped courses which will be offered at NHS and the region has taken on the new arts standards and that we will be revisiting in all schools.

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- 2) With the change in foreign languages, it's been heard in the community that the region may be offering more online foreign languages. If this is the case, how do the online courses that we are looking in to compare with other competitive schools?

Dr. Anna answered that the region has checked with other schools as to what they are offering, and the leadership's vision and hope in the next few years, is that when a student gets to high school, he/she will be able to take any language on line. This will give students the opportunity to continue French in High School. Apart from Spanish and French, we will be offering ASL (American Sign Language) and at the moment Latin will be the first office on line course.

- 3) Mrs. McLeod asked if anyone on the Board has seen the documentary, *Beyond Measures*, which talks about project based learning in a less traditional environment, how to work in groups, etc. and if the region has considered it?

Dr. Anna advised that neither she nor the Board have seen the documentary but they are looking into many different options.

- 4) Mrs. McLeod wanted to understand more about the changes in support services; what is the difference and why is it considered an improvement?

Dr. Anna explained that the counselors will work with all kids, the social worker handles more of the middle part which represent approximately 10-15% of the student body who have emotional behavioral concerns. This is to be more responsive rather than reactive to the needs of those children. The Psychologist will handle approximately 5-10% of the student body which addresses more comprehensive needs such as psychiatric evaluations.

- 5) With the declining enrollment, there is talk in the community that some people are wondering why we haven't already closed a school and are advocating for a closure. What would Dr. Anna like to say to the community in regards to this talk?

Dr. Anna wanted to be very clear and quash any rumors. The region does not have plans to close a school. The District Advisory Committee was formed to do a demographics as well as facilities feasibility study. The Committee will be holding a meeting to hear presentations from 3 firms, and from there 1 firm will be chosen to be recommended to the Board of Education in early April.

Nicole Batali of Woodbury asked:

- 1) What is the difference between a counselor and a social worker? What are the credentials and reason for replacing them?

Dr. Anna addressed this question previously when asked by Mrs. McLeod.

- 2) Does the person who will be the instructional leader for Math and Science have the credentials to do both?

Dr. Anna answered that the region is providing a lot of professional development in both science and math. She also mentioned that both subjects are so integrated, and that many small schools follow the same model.

- 3) Is the curriculum posted online and if yes, where is it? Will all curriculum be on line?

Mr. Rafferty did answer the question after the meeting to advise that any approved curriculum is available on line and any new ones will be available once approved by the Board of Education.

- 4) What is the vision for the science labs? Will it be a special 1-2/week instructional coaching session?

Dr. Anna assured that it is too important to be a special 1-2/week session. It will be more of a partnership of teaching/co-teaching units lasting over series' of days and will depend on the science units that are created.

Kathy Doyle of Woodbury asked the following:

- 1) For the Culinary program at WMS, is there money in the budget for startup costs and is the money needed for equipment?

Dr. Anna advised that there will be a \$30K one-time cost, which doesn't include food. If the region has ability to do it this year, then the goal is to have it complete and ready to go before summer break. A lot of the work will be done in house, thus saving the region money.

- 2) Ms. Doyle commented that the qualitative aspect is missing at the High School in respect to music, art, and drama.

Dr. Anna thanked her for her comment.

- 3) Ms. Doyle commented that she was not in favor of the swimming program due to the high cost involved and that CIAC has a lot of rules. She wanted to know if there is way to work with CIAC to find other small towns where the region can hook up with neighboring towns so that they can have the supporting experience.

Dr. Anna mentioned that the region already has partnerships and are constantly talking to other towns. It is a little difficult at time due to the competitive aspect.

Director of Athletics Suzi Greene advised that the Berkshire league already has the boys and girls swimming in the same season, which doesn't happen in larger towns. The league does this to save the districts money.

Dr. DeLuca asked if there were any further questions or comments.

Hearing no further comments, Mr. DeLuca adjourned the public hearing at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carol Ann Brown, Secretary
Regional School District 14 Board of Education

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Natascha Z. Schwartz, Board Clerk, 4/10/2018