

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held March 20, 2017 at Nonnewaug High School, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Board members: Michael Devine, Carol Ann Brown, George Bauer, Maryanne Van Aken, Janet Morgan, Pam Zmek, Superintendent Dr. Anna Cutaia-Leonard, Director of Finance and Operations Wayne, Administrators Mike Rafferty, Kim Culkin, Christina Fensore, and BOE clerk, Natascha Schwartz. Also in attendance were Towns of Woodbury & Bethlehem Selectmen & Finance. Missing: David Lampart, John Chapman

1. Call to Order

Ms. Morgan called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Morgan led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed 2017-18 Budget

Dr. Anna gave budget presentation to the Boards of Selectmen & Finance from the towns of Woodbury and Bethlehem along with a printout of the recommended budget.

4. Discussion of Superintendent's Proposed 2017-18 Budget

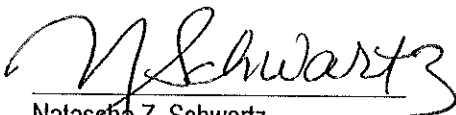
- Barbara Perkinson of Woodbury mentioned the network upgrades and if the funds could be placed under the renovation cost in the Bond? Mr. McAllister responded that the network upgrades are part of the lease program which is for all of the schools, not just NHS.
- Steve Sordi of Bethlehem questioned page 11 and why the amount wouldn't be 1.52% instead of 1.26%. Mr. McAllister advised that the year to year budget impact is 1.26%. Mr. Sordi went on to say that he understands what's in the presentation but over time we do recognize increases that offset the bottom line. He still considers it an increase even though the district is losing \$415K. Mr. Sordi continued on by saying that from that standpoint, the Board needs to be careful how it is presented to the public and that it needs to be very clear as a starting point that the 1.26% has to be rolled into the town budget.
- Bill Monti of Woodbury questioned the excess cost grant, and wondered why the differences in amount and if the \$415K was just for next year's placement or for two different years. Mr. McAllister advised that the \$415K is for the 2017-18 year.
- Alex de Sorbo asked if the district is given a certain dollar amount by the state, can the state cut over and above what they have given and where does it get hung up? Anticipation based on previous years. If it exceeds their appropriation, then they reallocate at a lower level. Mr. McAllister advised that the allocation is based on previous years and if the total SpEd exceeds the state appropriation then the state reallocates at a lower level.
- Lenny Assard of Bethlehem commented on the letter that was sent to the Board that it isn't just Education costs that are being cut. He wanted to know if there has been any talk of the ECS grant that was lost and what is the region hearing from CABA? Is ECS going to change? What about the Teacher's pension? Ms. Morgan commented that she doesn't believe that the Teacher's pension issue will stick.
- Dave Bulkus of Bethlehem questioned page 14 code 200 (employee benefits). In dropping OPEB (post-employment benefits cost of health insurance for retirees), what was the reasoning for the 2 year spike? Mr. McAllister advised that it was done on the auditor's and actuary's advice. The plan design changes were significant in allowing it to happen.
- Mr. Monti advised that the teachers are retiring that are not from the towns, but the towns are being billed. If it falls on the region, it shouldn't land on the towns' budget and that he believes that it should come out of the region 14 budget.

- Alex de Sorbo wanted to thank the Board of Education and that it shouldn't go unnoticed how much work went into this budget proposal. He doesn't believe the phrase "hard times" that was used during the presentation is accurate. He commented that this is a permanent change and need to figure out how to fix it. We only have these discussions during budget time. We don't spend time the rest of the year. Nicking away is not the way to go. If we don't deal with structural issues, then we're doing the taxpayers disservice.
- Dave Deakin of Bethlehem commented that we are trying to hold fingers in dyke from keeping flood waters from flowing over and that the region definitely need to look at structure.
- Steve Sordi wanted information on the debt service over the next 2 years. Mr. McAllister went over page 18 stating transferred 1% into capital budget, which was the same as 2015-16. \$673.5K allocated for the NHS renovation project, then another \$673.5K to be allocated for payment for the building projects. On page 20, the debt service was scheduled prior to the 2013 referendum. In about 4 years, the debt service on the NHS project is expected to be approximately \$2.5M Stan Love commented that these numbers are just for NHS building project.
- Stan Love stated that he heard from a source that 75% of the budget is labor. He mentioned that Connecticut has the strongest labor unions and want. Is the BOE even remotely satisfied with the negotiations with the teacher's unions when they occur? Ms. Morgan advised that the union has changed the deductibles which will be going up for employees. She also mentioned that the custodial staff is agreeable to making changes. Mr. Devine added that there is a lot of fear in arbitration and that it's very expensive to take contracts to arbitration and for the most part, settlements will be in favor of teachers. Dr. Anna advised that it is very highly regulated, guided by state averages, and that the region can't deviate much from other district. We will land in about the same area.
- Dave Aiden asked which page shows the cost of the Agriscience program, how many in district students are in the Agriscience program and does the region get reimbursed by out of district schools? Mr. McAllister advised that the costs are shown on pages 64 and 65 and confirmed that we do receive reimbursement from sending towns.
- Alex De Sorbo asked if the region receives any benefits by having the additional 18 students. We increased out of district students and should the region be considering not having those extra students? Can we cut back to make it an actual savings? Dr. Anna explained that having these extra students helps maintain a robustness and helps the whole district. It maintains balance of electives.
- Bill Butterly mentioned that he gave the program a lot of thought and thinks that the region is not showcasing the Agriscience program to its full potential and that currently, he believes that in general people are not aware of what the whole Agriscience program is or what fields their children can be trained in. Mr. Butterly suggested having a quarterly Agriscience open house to show kids in other towns what region14 students are learning.
- Nancy Grasing of Woodbury asked about the future of region 14 and commented that she suggests coming up with a strategic planning initiative as you would in business, to form a committee with good financial minds between the district and towns to discuss what the district will look like going forward. with good financial minds to get a committee together between district and towns. We need "buy-in".

5. Adjournment

Ms. Van Aken *moved to adjourn and seconded by Mr. Bauer. Motion carried unanimously 6-0-0.*
Meeting was adjourned at 8:55pm

Respectfully Submitted,



Natascha Z. Schwartz
Regional School District 14 Board Clerk

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Natascha Z. Schwartz, Board Clerk, 3/30/2017