

District Meeting- Public Hearing
Regional School District 14
Towns of Bethlehem and Woodbury
Date: Monday, April 2, 2012 Time: 7:30 PM
Place: Nonnewaug High School Auditorium
5 Minortown Road
Woodbury, Connecticut

Minutes

Present: Board members Charles Cosgriff, Sophieane Bartlett, George Bauer, John Chapman, Gary Suslavich, John Swendsen, Maryanne Van Aken and Pamela Zmek; Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler; Director of Finance/Operation James Reese; Administrators and Directors Alice Jones, Melinda McKenna, Michael Molzon, William Nemeec, Andrew O'Brien, MaryLou Torre, and Jeff Turner; about twenty-five members of the community and three members of the press

I. Call to Order

Mr. Cosgriff called the hearing to order at 7:33 pm

II. Appointment of Moderator

Mr. Cosgriff appointed Lou DeLuca to serve as Moderator of the public hearing.

III. Appointment of Meeting Clerk by the Moderator

Mr. DeLuca appointed Debra Carlton to serve as meeting clerk

IV. Call of the Meeting

Mr. DeLuca read the following call:

To present and receive questions about the Regional School District 14 Board of Education's proposed budget for 2012-2013

V. Presentation of the Region 14 Budget for the 2012- 2013 School Year

Mr. Goeler gave introductory remarks regarding the budget.

Mr. Reese presented a powerpoint and gave budget detail.

Mr. DeLuca invited public comment.

VI. Public Comment

Nancy Grazing, Woodbury, commented that although she supports school budgets, she is concerned that enrollment is decreasing while budgets increase. She noted that enrollment projections often prove to be high and, therefore, the total student enrollment predicted for this budget may be less than budgeted for.

Tom Arras, Woodbury, would appreciate a net current per pupil expenditure; noted that agriscience tuition has remained the same for several years; net to towns is high per student; budgets go up while enrollment goes down; the board is "out of touch with the reality of the region."

Duncan McDougal, Woodbury, requested costs per town, per student for sending towns; asked how is the cost of agriscience offset by the two towns; noted that sending towns do not fund improvements to the schools by way of budget increases.

Art McNally, Woodbury, questioned the need for 4 full time social workers, stating that students' needs for social work results from parental neglect; felt the assistant superintendent would be doing the work that principals were hired to do; stated he does not have the money we are asking for; predicted the budget will fail until it reaches 0%.

Karen Miller, Bethlehem, submitted a FOI request; believes that decreased enrollment should result in layoffs; asked about teachers' deductibles for health insurance; asked in pre-K is required; asked how much the maintenance bond would increase the budget

Katie Yocis, Woodbury, asked why the population is declining; if the students are not here, where are they going? She suspects the disgraceful state of the facilities could contribute to declining enrollment, but praised her students for their eagerness to learn, creativity and artistic abilities. She wants to take pride in the district but is discouraged as she arrives at NHS each day. She recognizes that State mandates require more credits, which require more classes, which require more teachers.

Candace DeFelice Fernandes, Woodbury, questioned who would continue to stay in our towns if we will not fund quality education. She likened the deferring of maintenance needs in the district to putting off repairs in our homes; eventually, she said, wear and tear will show.

Mr. Arras criticized unfunded mandates from the State; said people are not concerned about selling their homes; urged education at a sane price.

Mr. McDougal said that what Ms. Yocis and Ms. Fernandes said is true and that a 0% increase is not being sought. He objects to special education costs, high legal fees, and a past curriculum specialist who "copied" a science curriculum. We need teachers in the classroom, he said, and should just buy some other district's curriculum.

VII. Adjournment

Hearing no further comments, Mr. DeLuca adjourned the hearing at 7:50 pm