

A Special Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Tuesday, May 24, 2011, at 5:30 pm in the Nonnewaug High School Library, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Board Chair Stephen Sordi, Board members Scott Baider, Linda Bulvanoski, Deborah Corsico, Charles Cosgriff, Gary Suslavich and Pamela Zmek (arriving at 5:40 pm); also, Interim Superintendent Greg Little, Interim Business Manager Ed Arum, administrators Melinda McKenna, Alice Jones, MaryLou Torre, Lori Ferreira and Jeff Turner; and Director of Buildings/Grounds Mike Molzon

Absent: Board member George Bauer

Audience members included: Faculty members Vinita Chapman, Joyce Brazauskas and Jodie D'Alexander; three members of the press and approximately twelve members of the community.

I. Call to Order

Mr. Sordi called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Sordi led the Pledge of Allegiance

III. Discussion of 2011-12 Budget

Dr. Little discussed options for the scope of additional cuts to the budget, following its second failure at referendum.

Mr. Cosgriff favored going out again with the same number.

Mr. Baider asked for clarification of what will happen if a budget does not pass by July 1.

Ms. Bulvanoski urged not chipping away at the budget further because a significant number of pro-education citizens want to see the systemic delivery and support of K-12 curriculum maintained.

Ms. Corsico agreed that pro-education supporters will not tolerate cuts which impact programming, and urged minor reductions.

Mr. Suslavich feels there is a difference of opinion on how much money is needed to fund quality education, and urged putting out a budget that is responsible not just to parents but all citizens.

Mr. Baider feels the prior vote must be respected, but suggested modest reductions.

Ms. Zmek feels as few budgets as possible should be put out. The towns want 0%, so that is what the board should put out.

Mr. Sordi felt all the fat had been taken out of the budget and urged the board to come together to get the job done with modest cuts.

Dr. Little reported that discussion of teacher concessions, begun in March, had been ongoing; however, the teachers voted to offer no concessions.

He also restated an earlier comment, about the region "standing still." He meant in areas of building improvements, technology the region is not moving forward, for lack of funds. He did not mean to suggest that progress has not been made in curriculum and learning, because it has.

Also, monies for the coordinator positions (math and language arts) are still in the budget. He recommends allowing the new superintendent to restructure/reallocate those dollars as he sees fit.

Dr. Little distributed to the board and audience a list of potential cuts. Much discussion followed and board members gave their opinions on pay-for-play, reductions in positions of instructional support, elementary technology, music and math. There were opinions about over-staffing in areas of secretarial/clerks and business office support.

An option discussed was eliminating the technology instructional support position, plus reducing a business office staff FTE for a \$20,000 savings, for a total of about \$57,000 in budget reductions.

IV. Privilege of the Floor

Art McNally, Woodbury, respectfully disagrees that the board is "doing it for the kids." He feels bureaucracy is being maintained. Teachers won't cooperate until they "see heads roll." He urged getting rid of teachers and/or secretaries, and felt this is a lame duck session as the board will soon change in composition.

Karen Miller, Bethlehem, feels we are not collecting adequate funds for out-of-district agriscience students; criticized next year's teacher percentage wage increase; said budgets historically pass when the board complies with the wishes of the selectmen; urged not reducing the number of elementary teachers.

Eileen Budrewicz, Woodbury, asked for and received the approximate increase/decrease for Woodbury/Bethlehem taxpayers if the board supported a 1.759% increase. For an average priced home in Woodbury, the tax increase would go from about \$212 to \$200 and, in Bethlehem, the decrease in taxes would change from about \$30 to about \$40.

Tom Arras, Woodbury, also believes in doing what the selectmen want; feels per pupil expenditure is high; the public cannot give what they don't have; and asked if 29 positions have actually been cut – can that be demonstrated?

Duncan McDougall, Woodbury, noted that teachers could have made concessions but decided not to; they should be made to show proof of what they are accomplishing; volunteers should be brought in to do field work, etc. He said "you are a sterile board" and need to "loosen up."

Ms. Budrewicz noted that Bethlehem receives a tax decrease either way, and Woodbury pays less, too. She urged going out with a \$57,000 decrease and the budget will pass.

Paula Paolino, Woodbury, asked if teachers have taken wage freezes in the past. Mr. Baider answered that these have come in the form of increased employee contributions to health care, and compression of steps. Ms. Corsico added that, with binding arbitration, and considering where our salaries are, we settled at the end of the negotiations period with numbers that were in line with salaries at the time; also, Woodbury Board of Finance participated in negotiations with teachers.

Vinita Chapman, Woodbury, spoke in favor of getting the vote out, first and foremost. She said cutting teachers impacts students; loss of the technology teacher impacts delivery of services; she does not want to go back to the time when curriculum was not moving forward.

Joyce Brazauskas, Woodbury, urged consideration for the direction the board is already heading toward and for making minimal cuts; 25 votes is minimal; she urged protecting property values by providing sound education.

Roberta Zulpa, Woodbury, urged not making large decreases; eliminating teachers will drive families out of town.

Mr. McNally threatened that if the board does not put out a 0%, the budget will fail by a larger margin next time.

Jeanne Ross, Woodbury, noted that it takes an incredible effort to pass a budget and that consensus, and unified effort, from the board is required.

V. Revision of the 2011-12 Budget

Mr. Sordi requested a *motion to accept a budget with percentage increase of 1.759% for a total budget of \$30,246,029, representing a decrease of \$57,988.* Entered by Ms. Corsico, second by Mr. Cosgriff.

Motion carried 5-2, with Mr. Baider, Ms. Bulvanoski, Ms. Corsico, Mr. Cosgriff, and Mr. Sordi voting yes, and Mr. Suslavich and Ms. Zmek voting no.

VI. Setting Date for District Meeting and Referendum

Mr. Arum read the Notice of Warning of District Meeting and requested a *motion that the District Meeting be held on Monday, June 6, 2011 with referendum to be held the following day, June 7, 2011.* Entered by Ms. Corsico, second by Mr. Baider. **Motion carried 7-0.**

VII. Adjournment

Ms. Bulvanoski entered a **motion to adjourn**, second by Mr. Baider.

Motion carried 7-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela Zmek, Secretary
Regional School District #14 Board of Education

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Debra W. Carlton, Board Clerk, 5/26/11