

**Region One Board of Education
Public Hearing
Thursday, April 5, 2018**

A Public Hearing regarding the Regional School District Number One proposed budget for 2018-2019 was held on Thursday, April 5, 2018, in the library at HVRHS. A quorum of the Region One Board of Education was present: Chair, Bob Whelan, Sharon; Pat Mechare, Canaan; John Sanders, Cornwall; and Jennifer Weigel, Salisbury. Doug Humes, North Canaan, was absent.

Also present were: Superintendent Pam Vogel; Assistant Superintendent Lisa Carter; Business Manager Samuel Herrick; HVRHS Principal Jose Martinez; Mark Burdick as Moderator; and members of the public and press.

Chair Whelan called the Public Hearing to order at 7:03 p.m. Chair Whelan welcomed everyone and highlighted the budget process that was used this year to develop the proposed 2018-2019 regional budget. He stated that two of the major factors in the budget include the principal and interest on the bond for the construction project and the savings in healthcare costs associated with a switch in health care insurance provider.

Business Manager Sam Herrick then reviewed the budget, in detail, highlighting all areas in which there was a change from the previous budget. Since the start of the budget process, on January 2, 2018, there have been reductions of over \$427,000, which have produced a net 0% budget, with a \$0 increase, for the 2018-2019 year.

A **motion** was made by Ms. Mechare, seconded by Ms. Weigel, to appoint Mark Burdick as Moderator for the Public Hearing. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Herrick then introduced Mark Burdick, who served as Moderator for the Public Hearing.

Mr. Burdick presented the ground rules, stating that each person wishing to speak will state his/her name and the town in which they reside within Region One. Each comment period will be limited to three minutes.

Public comment was heard from Kurt Stampfle of North Canaan. He asked the fluidity of the budget and if what was presented was set in stone. Mr. Herrick explained that the budget is a spending plan/proposal, and at the special meeting being held after the Public Hearing, that the Board could change the budget prior to moving forward to referendum. Mr. Stampfle expressed concern of the reduction of the 0.4 FTE in the English department and said that he thought it was "penny wise, pound foolish." He thought that savings could be achieved in other areas, and that it would be unwise for the Board to not examine that further.

Public comment was heard from Linda Patz of North Canaan. She elaborated on the Ms. Messina and Ms. Bucco partnership in Humanities English. She stated that it was the best experience for both of her children.

Public comment was heard from Gretchen Hachmeister of Sharon. She wanted to clarify that although the current German students would be able to complete their German program over the next couple of years, that the German program in the school would be phased out and that German 1 has been eliminated for next year. She stated that she is distressed by this and feels that German should be and must be saved. She also read a letter from a resident of Falls Village in support of the German program. Ms. Carter explained that the decision to phase out the German program was not made lightly. She stated that the decision had to be made to best serve the greatest number of students and that the German program has many obstacles. There is low enrollment in German, the enrollment substantially drops off after the first year, it is difficult to hire a German teacher, and there is a decrease in interest among students to enroll in German. She stated that we are constrained by our resources. Principal Martinez stated some enrollment facts, including that this year, in German levels 3, 4, and 5, students were combined to one class period, because all three levels total to only 8 students.

Public comment was heard from Shane Stampfle of North Canaan. He stated that he is a current German 2 student and asked that the Board re-consider on the phasing out of the German program, as it would be a disservice to students that will deprive future students.

Public comment was heard from Lynn Harrington of Kent. She questioned the need for \$5,000 for the Special Olympics program. Dr. Vogel explained that the Special Olympics was being developed as a new program for any students with an IEP and that it will likely need two coaches, as it will be a regional program. She stated that she had already received one grant and will look for donations. Ms. Harrington then stated that she spoke with a special education teacher in another district who told her that they did not ask for money from their Board, that they raised it. Dr. Vogel stated that they will be looking to enlist volunteers and look for donations, but the \$5,000 estimated costs will likely still be needed for coaches and transportation. Ms. Harrington questioned how many students would participate. Enrollment is unknown at this time, as the program has not been started yet, but there are plans offer basketball and track and field.

Public comment was heard from Linda Patz of North Canaan. She thanked the Board and the Administration for hiring a teacher to teach German next year, rather than utilizing a virtual learning process.

Public comment was heard from Kathy Wheeler, retired German Teacher. She stated that she came to the meeting out of concern that the German program is in jeopardy. She stated that all world language program enrollments tend to drop off after two years, and that is not unique to German. She stated that the study of German enhances a college application and that it could attract more students to HVRHS. She also thanked the Board for utilizing a teacher and not a virtual program.

Public comment was heard from Gretchen Hachmeister of Sharon. She stated that in preliminary numbers for course enrollments next year, that it looks like eleven out of twelve German 2 students have shown interest in continuing on to German 3.

Public comment was heard from Pat Mechare. She stated that for the 2017-2018 budget, that there appears that there may be an excess from the proposed budget to the actual budget, and is wondering where that money goes. Mr. Herrick explained that historically, that money is returned to the member towns. He also stated that there have been some exceptions to that in the past, where some of the excess funding has been utilized for building projects, professional development, or curriculum development.

Public comment was again heard from Pat Mechare. She stated that she was surprised to see that electricity costs are projected to go up. Mr. Herrick explained that the solar project provides about 15% of the electricity utilization, and that savings is factored in. He also stated that the LED lighting was paid for out of the 2016-2017 budget, which reduced the 2017-2018 budget. He stated that the district does get a good rate on kwh for the supply charge, but that the delivery charge is an estimate, with a 5% increase factored in.

Public comment was again heard from Pat Mechare. Ms. Mechare asked about the cost of health insurance for the previous Superintendent. Mr. Herrick stated that her contract allows her three years of a single coverage plan and that the 2018-2019 year would be the second year of that contract.

Hearing no further questions or comments, moderator Mark Burdick declared the Public Hearing closed at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina Bunce

Tina Bunce
Board Clerk