

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education held a District Meeting and Referendum Vote of Regional School District 13 of the State of Connecticut on Wednesday, June 17, 2026 at 7:00 P.M. in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, CT for the following purpose: To present the proposed budget for the 2026-2027 fiscal year as prepared by the Regional School District 13 Board of Education.

Board of Education Members Present: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, and Mr. Konstantino.

Board of Education Members Absent: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Caramanello, Mr. Stone, and Mr. DelVecchio

Administration Present: Dr. Leggett, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

*Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to nominate Norman Hicks as the moderator.*

*All in favor of accepting the nomination of Norman Hicks as the moderator: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Darcy, and Mr. Konstantino. Motion passed.*

*Mr. Hicks requested that Mr. Konstantino read the Warning of the District Meeting and referendum and the return of the call into the record.*

Mr. Moore presented the proposed 2026-2027 budget. Following the failure of the second budget referendum, the Board of Education met to review community feedback and consider additional reductions. The meeting drew strong public engagement, including nearly 50 emails from residents offering comments and suggestions. Because of statutory timing requirements, the next referendum was scheduled for a Thursday, an unusual voting day that Mr. Moore acknowledged could create the need to make everyone aware it is not a Tuesday. Since Dr. Leggett's original February proposal, which represented a 5.11% increase, the budget has been reduced through multiple iterations. Mr. Moore reported that the first referendum budget carried about a 4.5% increase, the second referendum budget reflected a 3.94% increase, and the current proposal totals \$43,969,710.00, representing a 3.35% increase. Overall, roughly \$750,000.00 has been removed from the original proposal.

The latest reductions total \$248,632.00 and include cuts to curriculum development resources, software expenditures, some transportation services, and unfilled stipend positions. Even with these reductions, Mr. Moore emphasized the need to continue supporting curriculum development and state-mandated educational programs. The proposed budget's gross increase is 3.35%, while the net increase to taxpayers is lower due to state grants and other revenue sources. Budget presentations also highlighted the district's

major expenditure categories, including salaries, benefits, operating expenses, supplies, and debt service. Debt service costs have returned to the general fund budget because the district previously utilized bond premiums and interest income to offset payments, an option that is no longer available.

Mr. Moore also reviewed the district's revenue sources, which include adult education programs, facility rentals, interest earnings, fund balance carryover, and state and federal grants. Facility rentals continue to generate revenue through community use of district spaces, such as the auditorium for performances and recitals. Mr. Moore noted that fund balance carryover has decreased significantly in recent years because the district has budgeted staffing more closely to actual costs. Historically, budgets assumed vacancy savings from staff turnover, but those savings have not materialized, resulting in over expending the salary line. State and federal revenues, including special education excess cost grants and supplementary aid, total approximately \$1.59 million and help reduce the amount that must be funded by local taxpayers.

Capital expenditures remain unchanged from previous budget proposals. Because Connecticut boards of education have limited ability to accumulate large capital reserves, major projects are typically funded through bonding. The capital budget focuses on anticipated maintenance needs and smaller-scale projects, including \$100,000.00 reserved annually for unexpected building repairs and equipment replacements. Mr. Moore emphasized that these funds are necessary to maintain aging facilities until the opening of Three Oaks Memorial School. The presentation also highlighted per-pupil spending, with Mr. Moore noting that district costs remain relatively stable and comparable to neighboring districts. Mr. Moore explained that regional school districts face higher operational expenses than many municipal districts because they are responsible for maintaining extensive campuses, roads, grounds, and multiple school buildings without support from municipal public works departments.

Finally, Mr. Moore reviewed the allocation of costs between Durham and Middlefield. Under the district's five-year rolling average formula, Durham is responsible for 65.38% of the budget and Middlefield for 34.62%. After accounting for state education grants of approximately \$3.29 million for Durham and \$2.1 million for Middlefield, the resulting net local obligations are approximately \$27.5 million for Durham and \$14.6 million for Middlefield. Mr. Moore concluded the presentation with a reminder that the referendum would be held the following day from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the community centers in both towns. Mr. Moore encouraged residents to participate in the vote, emphasizing the importance of community input in determining the district's financial future.

Mr. Roraback emphasized that the district is effectively operating five facilities rather than three schools. The district continues to maintain four active school buildings in addition to swing-space facilities during the construction and transition period.

Mr. Hicks offered the opportunity for attending residents to ask questions.

Craig Bradanini, president of the Regional School District 13 Education Association, thanked the Board of Education, administration, staff, and community members for their efforts throughout the difficult budget process. He acknowledged the significant public engagement that had occurred through emails, phone calls, public comments, questions, and suggestions, noting that the community's involvement demonstrated a strong commitment to the district and its students. Mr. Bradanini emphasized that

meaningful community participation is an important part of building strong schools and finding solutions that serve students well.

Mr. Bradanini also reminded attendees that budget decisions extend beyond numbers and directly affect classrooms, programs, staff, and student opportunities. He stated that the third referendum proposal reflected careful consideration, compromise, and difficult choices made in response to financial realities. While recognizing the need for fiscal responsibility, he stressed that reductions to staffing and programs have real consequences for both students and educators. On behalf of the teachers' association, he expressed the commitment of educators to the success of every student in the district and encouraged all eligible voters to participate in the referendum and support the proposed budget.

A community member, Alma Elder, addressed the Board of Education and asked what percentage of the district's budget is dedicated to special education and what the average class sizes are across the district, acknowledging that class sizes likely vary between elementary, middle, and high school levels. Ms. Elder noted that these were questions she had heard discussed by others in the community and expressed interest in understanding the answers as a taxpayer and resident. She thanked the board for its attention and requested information that could help provide greater public understanding of the district's budget and educational programs.

Dr. Leggett explained that classes generally average between 18 and 20 students, though enrollment varies by grade level and school.

Mr. Moore noted that approximately 22% of the district's student population receives special education services. Mr. Roraback noted that special education identification rates have been increasing both locally and statewide, contributing to growing service demands and costs. Mr. Moore also explained that the level and cost of services vary significantly based on individual student needs, ranging from supplemental support within general education classrooms to specialized staff, intensive services, and out-of-district placements when the district cannot provide the required programs. *Mr. Hicks entered a motion to adjourn the meeting until 6:00 a.m. tomorrow morning for the referendum.*

*Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.*

Respectfully submitted by Meghan Shortell-Fratantonio