

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education Finance Committee met in special session on Wednesday, November 12, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Committee Members Present: Mr. Stone

Board of Education Members Present: Mr. Moore, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mrs. Petrella

Committee Members Absent: Mrs. Opalacz, Mr. Neidhardt, Mr. Stengel, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Cowan and Mr. DeVecchio

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

Others in attendance: Jim Martinelli, Town of Durham Board of Finance

Mr. Stone called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to approve the agenda as presented.

All in favor of approving the agenda as presented: Mr. Stone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Dahlheimer and Mrs. Petrella. Motion passed.

Approval of Minutes – February 27, 2025

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the February 27, 2025 meeting minutes as presented.

All in favor of approving the February 27, 2025 meeting minutes as presented: Mr. Stone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Dahlheimer and Mrs. Petrella. Motion passed.

2026-2027 Budget

The district is following the same budget calendar as last year, except for an added November Finance Committee meeting. The calendar has been sent to the towns. The board emphasized the importance of receiving early feedback from both towns to prevent last-minute tensions during the budget vote. A joint

meeting with the Boards of Selectmen (Durham and Middlefield) is being scheduled to discuss major issues early on as the district prepared the budget.

The board discussed capital improvements that are occurring in both Durham and Middlefield, noting road improvements and an extended sidewalk in Durham and the new firehouse being built in Middlefield, while also addressing the economic concerns that face residents, such as financial burdens and the rise in need of social services.

The committee identified that the state provides limited reimbursement and support, hurting rural districts that have aging buildings, limited budgets, and potential mold issues, as seen in other districts. Committee members recommended to send a representative to rural district meetings and to push for better funding formulas and attention to rural needs, and that a DRIP fund for small capital improvements may help in the future.

The committee discussed the advantage of larger bonds when the question was raised by Mr. Martinelli, noting the last district bond was \$6.9M to fund capital projects. While it was noted that a larger bond may not pass town approval, committee members identified a larger bond (e.g. \$10M) could cover long-term capital needs instead of repeated small bonds. In addition, some improvement projects, like the tennis courts on the school/town property line, could be a joint improvement project that benefits the needs of both the school and the town.

The committee members also discussed the future uses of Lyman School and eventually Brewster School. While there are legal factors that will need to be considered, members discussed the value of exploring the interest that magnet or special education programs may have in utilizing the space.

The committee also discussed the major operational budget drivers, which include salaries (contractual), healthcare (currently stable but unpredictable), inflation influenced by national policy and tariffs. After the joint meeting with Boards of Selectmen, the Finance Committee will reconvene with concrete action items to review.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to adjourn the meeting at 5:30.

*All in favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Stone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Dahlheimer and Mrs. Petrella.
Motion passed.*

Respectfully submitted by Meghan Shortell-Fratantonio