

STONINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING March 27, 2014

Frank Todisco, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. in the Stonington High School Commons. Members present were Deborah Downie, Secretary, Faith Leitner, Alisa Morrison, Craig Esposito, Alexa Garvey, and Terry Stefanski.

Also present were Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent of Schools, Ana de Oliveira, Recording Secretary, members of the staff, and interested citizens.

Frank Todisco opened the meeting with a short summary of what impacts the district will feel with the BOF budget cuts.

Comments from Citizens

Gretchen Noonan thanked the Board and administration for their work on the budget presentation to the Board of Finance. Mrs. Noonan commented on the affects that the cuts would have on the students and staff in Stonington.

Steven Smith commended the Board and administration for the budget and asked the community to contact the state to stop the unfunded mandates. Mr. Smith also noted that the community needs to let the town know that the town can do better for the students of Stonington in regards to education.

Sue Jones commented on the great attendance at the meeting, commended, and thanked the Board for their work. Mrs. Jones advised the community that parents need to be present at the hearing on April 10. Mrs. Jones noted that she would be willing to pay to participate in extracurricular activities before seeing teachers cut and believes transportation to alternative schools and schools of choice needs to be looked at again.

Tim O'Brien spoke on schools of choice and their means of funding.

Rob Marseglia asked that the Board supply a list of items that may be cut so the community can address these items with the BOF on April 10.

Kevin Bornstein commented on the budget cuts and suggested the Board focus on things that only certified staff can do and use volunteers for other non-certified duties when looking at budget cuts. Mr. Bornstein talked about information that would be helpful to justify the number of certified staff and administrators needed for student progress while noting that the fundamental mission is education, which cannot be further impacted.

Jennifer Middleton said, "Hats off" to all educators and their commitment to the students. Ms. Middleton spoke on links between physical activity and learning. Ms. Middleton noted that she would rather see other items kept in the budget and eliminate the AP courses, and asked for better notification of special Board meetings.

Harriett Statchen spoke on the budget process and how un-democratic the process of the budget approval currently is and the possibility of changing the charter to correct the process. Ms. Statchen also asked what would happen if we say no to the BOF on proposed budget cuts.

Grace Murray commented on her willingness to pay more in taxes to provide every child in this town with an education and feels that the BOF needs to hear this from parents.

Sarah Lewandowski thanked the Board for standing up to the BOF and feels if we continue the fight eventually we can win.

Bruce Yarnall commented on how the members of the BOF are elected, changing the charter, and asked that the community get friends and neighbors out on April 10. Mr. Yarnall commended the BOE for their work on the budget.

2014-2015 Calendar – Spring Break Issue

Dr. Van Riley explained the issue of spring break for the 2014-15 school year calendar, which currently is scheduled for April 6-10. Dr. Riley recommended that spring break be changed to the week of April 13-17, which would coincide with LEARN's regional calendar and most area school districts.