

Frank Todisco, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Stonington High School Commons. Members present were Faith Leitner, Secretary, Deborah Downie, Alexa Garvey, Terry Stefanski, Candace Anderson, and Craig Esposito.

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

Comments from Citizens Relative to the Budget

Sue Jones asked if there would be action or a vote taken on the budget tonight. Frank Todisco answered there will not be any votes tonight on the budget.

Presentation on Staffing and Class Sizes

Van Riley thanked the Board and the Leadership Team for this opportunity and explained there have been many questions over the years on staffing, and what type of formula is used and what aspects are involved. Dr. Riley explained staffing particularly teachers is dependent on two things and one is enrollment. If enrollment goes down the fewer teachers are needed if goes up more teachers are need but staffing is also dependent on other things such as, the we need to meet the needs of students and provide programs. Dr. Riley said he felt it would be important to hear from the administration team and shared an outline of items, which he explained to the Board and community regarding staffing and enrollment. (Outline attached)

The elementary principals, Jenn McCurdy and Alicia Dawe shared information on grade levels and their recommendations on class sizes. The elementary principals spoke of the demands that are set at each grade level, students that require one to one supports, and unknowns that arrive. The team recommended a smaller size classroom for K-2 classes with a class size of 16-19 with a max of 20 students and 18-22 with a max of 23 students for Grades 3-4. The principals also spoke of the increase of special supports for students, increase in military families, the increase in number of student transfers into Deans Mill School, changes in teaching now versus years ago, a rise of free and reduced at West Vine Street School, CHR cases, and DCF placements. The team spoke on the assessments, and interventions that put in place at each school. The elementary team spoke on the benefits of small class sizes, special education impact, and unique challenges per site.

Deborah Downie asked about the enrollment numbers when students move in during the year. Ms. McCurdy explained the historical trend of enrollment changes during the year. Craig Esposito asked what formula is used now for staffing. Mrs. Dawe explained kindergarten is the most difficult to project; they look at local and surrounding preschools and make the best estimate. Staffing for grades 1-4 are easier by using the current class size and needs to project next year class size, there is not a formula. Alexa Garvey asked about student supports, when is the behavioral specialist called in and how this is helping students. Ms. McCurdy added it is on a student-by-student basis and Mrs. Van Etten added this is approved through the Special Services office. Terry Stefanski asked what is the average class size now in K-1. The team noted current class size is about 18 students and it fluctuates. Faith Leitner asked when are tutors used in elementary, middle and high school and would they be a help and how many are there in the district? Mrs. Van Etten noted that Special Services takes care of tutors for expulsions, students with medial leave, alternative instruction for an ELL and a variety of reasons. Mrs. Gullickson noted a second set of tutors are through Title I funds based on percent of free and reduced students and currently have 4 or 5 from Title I funding.

The middle school team, Tim Smith and Greg Keith spoke on middle school level class sizes and how they are derived. Mr. Smith and Mr. Keith spoke on the effect of class size decisions on instruction, grade level special education services and additional special education programs, self-contained classroom, inclusion, intensive reading intervention and resource room. Mr. Keith noted Mystic Middle School, at the moment, has four grade levels with four teachers each and does not qualify for Title I funds so we need to be creative on how we provide supports. Mr. Smith and Mr. Keith noted students with special services have increased even though enrollment has decreased.

Alexa Garvey spoke on classroom for greater need or behavior, is that by grade level? Mr. Smith explained this is not by grade level; we have two separate classrooms, a behavioral that is grades 5-8 and a greater needs classroom that is also grades 5-8.