

RTM Education Committee Minutes  
Town Hall Auditorium  
May 2, 2016

The meeting was called to order by Committee Vice Chair, Lois Schneider at 8:07 PM.

14 Members in attendance: Lucy Fiore, Lois Schneider, Pam Sparkman, Emily McDermott, Barbara Thorne, Susan Morrison, Sandy Savage, Janet Grogan, Susan Kwun, Young-Sup Lee, Jay Hardison, Joanne Sawitsky, Ed Washecka, Dennis Maroney

Absent: Derek Lublin

Guests: Darien Schools Superintendent, Dr. Daniel Brenner, Board of Education Chair Michael Harman, BOE Member Kathrine Stein & four members of the public.

Topics: 2016 Education Budget

Question #1 Lois Schneider asked Dr Brenner for a brief overview on Special Education. Discussion Ensued.

Question #2 Barbara Thorne asked Dr. Brenner about Kindergarten enrollment for the 2016-2017 school year. Dr. Brenner explained that enrollment was light so far but that it is early in the process and parents are still registering their children.

Question #3 Pam Sparkman asked Dr. Brenner and BOE members present how the district would get along with the \$1.6 million cut made by the state. Dr. Brenner explained the cuts. Some expenditures are postponed. Dr. Brenner and the Board have been working closely with the Board of Finance.

Question #4 Sandy Savage asked about the facilities study. Dr. Brenner says the first part of the study will be completed May 24<sup>th</sup> and the second part of the study which is the BOE building survey will not be completed until the end of the Summer. Discussion ensued.

Question #5 Janet Grogan asked about 2 line items on page #67 of the BOE budget book. The line items address long term substitutes and their pay. Short discussion ensued.

Question #6 Susan Morrison requested the memos and attachments on teacher training that are not on the website. Dr. Brenner agreed to provide them.

Question #7 Lois Schneider asked Dr. Brenner about foreign language at Middlesex and at the elementary level. Short Discussion ensued.

Question #8 Ed Washecka inquired about the Darien Athletic Foundation donations and the appropriateness of accepting such large donations. Mr. Harman said the BOE looks very closely at such donations and gifts. Mr. Harman said, the BOE receives gifts from the PTO, The Darien Technology Foundation and all are very generous and appropriate. Mr. Harmon felt strongly that core items such as technology should be supported by the district.

Question #9 Young-Sup Lee asked about donated items and Maintenance. Dr. Brenner explained that the items donated from DAF, DTF, All the PTO groups are enrichment. They are not core. Dr. Brenner remarked that the generosity of Darien residents is unsurpassed. Jay Hardsion added that some gifts have maintenance included in the original gift.

Question #10 Jay Hardison asked about librarians becoming secretaries at the elementary schools and what this is doing to our libraries. Dr. Brenner explained that he has been doing some shuffling so no one loses their jobs and people need to go where they are needed. According to Dr Brenner, the elementary schools are grossly understaffed. Lois Schneider commented that she thought this was a good idea.

Question #11 Pam Sparkman inquired on spending \$100,000. for the study on the DHS cafeteria. Long discussion ensued. Dr, Brenner explained why we need the study, Mr. Harmon concurred. There was then a long discussion by members of the education committee on this topic. Many members feel it is a scheduling issue and we shouldn't be spending this money right now. Young-Sup Lee commented that perhaps the cafeteria problem could be fixed through scheduling. Dr. Brenner explained that the schedule is complicated and it is different everyday because that is what is

best for the students. Dr. Brenner feels strongly that the cafeteria should be built for 425 students and explained there are some very large classes moving into the High School and we need to be prepared. Barbara Thorne shared an observation that kids have a herd mentality and they need to sit together and socialize at lunch. Mrs. Thorne says this is an important part of high school and socialization.

9:35 PM Motion made to approve the Education Budget of \$93,847,816.  
14 members present and the vote on the Education Budget was unanimously approved

9:40 PM Motion made to approve the BOE Capital Budget of approximately \$2,138,500.  
14 members present and the vote on the Capital Budget was unanimously approved.

9:45 Motion to approve the minutes from the April 5, 2016 meeting.  
10 members approved the minutes with 4 members abstaining.  
Members approving: Hardison, Fiore, Schneider, Thorne, Savage, McDermott, Lee, Kwun, & Sparkman

9:55 Meeting adjourned by Dennis Maroney

Submitted by Lucy Fiore May 4, 2016  
Clerk, RTM Education Committee