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Regional School District 13 **Board of Education** **August 12, 2026**

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, August 12, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board of Education Members Present: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Cowan, and Mr. Viens (attending virtually).
Board of Education Members Absent: Mr. Konstantino, Mr. Simmons, 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 6:00 P.M.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the agenda as presented.

All in favor of approving the agenda as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy, Mrs. Cowan, and Mr. Viens. Motion passed.

Public Comment

Aaliyah Watson and Ava Almodovar, rising seniors and Class of 2027 officers, asked the Board to consider expanding graduation recognition to include achievements such as 200 hours of community service, four years of music participation, and academic honors. They emphasized that the goal is not to take recognition away from athletics, but to create a fair and inclusive system that recognizes students for significant commitment, achievement, responsibility, and service across different areas.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education Meeting - July 8, 2026

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the July 8, 2026 Meeting Minutes as presented.

All in favor of accepting the July 8, 2026 Meeting Minutes as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy, and Mr. Viens. Mrs. Cowan abstained. Motion passed by majority vote.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Leggett presented the superintendent's report to the Board. In her report, Dr. Leggett thanked summer and 12-month employees for their work preparing schools for the new school year and reported that 72 students participated in the successful extended school year program. Dr. Leggett also announced leadership changes at Brewster and Strong, highlighted upcoming digital wellness initiatives focused on AI, social media, and screen time, and emphasized the confirmed need for a full-time library media specialist at the high school following her experience at a library media conference.

Dr. Leggett also reported that there was no update yet on the Middlefield building permit fee dispute, as a scheduled vote on a settlement agreement was not fulfilled, with another meeting planned for August 17 in hopes of reaching a resolution. Dr. Leggett also provided updates on the Three Oaks Memorial School project, including a furniture demonstration day for the new elementary school, ongoing discussions about CRHS tennis courts, and plans to schedule the second board retreat.

Additionally, Dr. Leggett thanked the Benchwarmers organization for recent contributions, including new gym shades and repainting the girls' softball dugout, and encouraged community members to see the improvements.

Chairman Update

Mr. Moore presented the Chairman's report. Mr. Moore thanked staff for their contributions to the district's annual publication, which will be distributed to residents by postcard (with QR Code) and made available online and at local community locations. The Board also recognized Mrs. Neubig for her exceptional leadership and dedication, particularly her work on the district budget and the Three Oaks Memorial School renovation project, highlighting her expertise, professionalism, financial planning, and commitment to the Region 13 community.

Staff Report

A. Director of Finance – Kim Neubig

Mrs. Neubig presented a financial update. The district completed the 2025–2026 financial closeout with 99% of the budget expended and 100% of budgeted revenue received, resulting in a positive net budget position that is allocated to build the 2027–2028 budget. The annual audit is also progressing smoothly, with fieldwork underway, and the final audit report is expected to be presented to the full Board in February.

The Board discussed holding an earlier Finance Committee meeting, potentially in late September, to review the Three Oaks Memorial School project budget, address ongoing questions, and provide both towns with a clearer understanding of the project's financial status. The meeting would also allow the committee to discuss upcoming debt service increases and other financial changes before the formal budget season begins.

New Business - Discussions and Possible Votes

A. Approval of Strategic Plan goals and Vision of a Graduate

The Board reviewed the revised strategic plan, which incorporated feedback from staff, community members, and online sessions, with only minor changes made. Dr. Leggett noted that the more detailed school-level goals and objectives did not require Board approval.

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to approve the Strategic Plan goals and Vision of a Graduate as presented.

All in favor of accepting the Strategic Plan goals and Vision of a Graduate as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Viens, and Mrs. Cowan. Motion passed.

B. Graduation Adornments

The Board discussed creating clear guidelines for graduation adornments and recognition after issues arose this year with unapproved cords, medals, and other decorations. The proposed graduation adornments would initially be limited to students recognized by the National Honor Society, French Honor Society, Spanish Honor Society, and scholar-athletes who have successfully completed 12 athletic seasons. The Board noted that the list could be expanded or revised as the graduation recognition guidelines are further developed. Members generally supported continuing the conversation about recognizing music, community service/service learning, military service, and cultural identity, while emphasizing the need for consistent standards, equity, and maintaining the formality of graduation. The Board agreed to work with the Class Council and student representatives to develop recommendations, with the goal of establishing guidelines before the end of the fall.

C. School-Based Clinician Memo

The Board discussed whether to charge school-based mental health providers rent for using district facilities, noting that the services currently provide significant benefits to students at no direct cost to the district. While one proposal estimated the district could collect approximately $30,000.00 in rental fees, Dr. Leggett recommended prioritizing additional providers and expanding high school coverage to increase the value of free services from about $68,807.00 to more than $100,000.00. Board members debated the fairness of charging rent, the potential impact on provider availability, accessibility for families, and whether additional school-based providers could better meet the growing need for student mental health services.

The Board clarified that school-based clinicians are accessible to students beyond those with IEPs or 504 plans, with referrals potentially coming from counselors, psychologists, social workers, teachers, or parents, while students age 18 and older may self-refer. Members discussed the fluctuating demand for services and the possibility of expanding coverage at the high school by working with existing providers, while also considering whether providers should pay rent or offer a portion of services pro bono for uninsured students. The Board asked Mrs. Cowan and staff to research rental rates and practices in neighboring districts and return with additional information before making a decision.

D. Policy Review
1. First read on below policies
a. Admission to Public Schools At or Before Age Five 5112 (repeal)
b. Recording Meetings Without Consent

The Board conducted a first reading of two policy changes: repealing the policy on admission to public schools before age five due to a change in state law and reviewing a new policy regarding recording meetings without consent. The recording policy, developed jointly by CABE and Shipman, aims to promote open and honest communication while allowing exceptions for recordings involving safety concerns, abuse, bullying, discrimination, legal violations, or other serious misconduct. The policies will be brought to the Board next month for further review.

2. Second read and possible vote on below policies
a. Non-Discrimination - Community 1118
b. Non-Discrimination - Personnel 4118
c. Non-Discrimination - Students 5146

The Board conducted a second reading of three non-discrimination policies covering the community, personnel, and students. The revisions primarily added updated legal definitions, including provisions related to trafficking and domestic violence.

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to adopt Non-Discrimination - Community 1118, Non-Discrimination - Personnel 4118, and Non-Discrimination - Students 5146 policies as presented.

All in favor of adopting Non-Discrimination - Community 1118, Non-Discrimination - Personnel 4118, and Non-Discrimination - Students 5146 policies as presented: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Viens, and Mrs. Cowan. Motion passed.

Committee Reports

A. Building Committee Meeting - July 1, 2026
B. Building Committee Meeting - July 8, 2026
C. Building Committee Meeting - July 15, 2026
D. Building Committee Meeting – July 29, 2026

The Building Committee's July meetings focused on keeping the Three Oaks Memorial School project within its approved budget while determining which alternates and additional items could be included. The project is currently under budget, allowing the committee to prioritize finding the funds for the outdoor classroom and potentially add rubber surfacing if additional funds become available, particularly if the Middlefield permit fee dispute is resolved favorably. The Board also iterated that the district has paid more than $600,000.00 in permit fees, supports paying reasonable and justified fees, and disputes fees that exceed the town's actual costs. It was encouraged for the public to review the court filing for factual information about the case.

Board Communications and Professional Development

The Board received correspondence supporting the importance of community service in graduation recognitions and discussed scheduling the second Board retreat, ultimately deciding to seek a date when more Board members could attend. The Board also agreed to send a formal letter to Middlefield regarding its vacant Board of Education seat, discussed scheduling Finance and School Naming Committee meetings, and noted that the outdoor classroom's owl-like design could potentially inspire the future school mascot.

Public Comment

Eileen Buckheit expressed strong concern about the ongoing building permit fee dispute, describing the lack of cooperation between Durham and Middlefield as inequitable and damaging to the spirit of the regional school district. Ms. Buckheit questioned whether the state and state legislators have been adequately informed, emphasized that permit fees should reflect actual municipal costs rather than duplicate third-party review expenses, and noted that the issue could have significant financial implications for both the district and Durham taxpayers.

Elizabeth Shoudy, a former RSD 13 member, expressed concern that graduation ceremonies may not adequately recognize support staff, noting her own experience of feeling excluded despite her direct responsibilities with students. She also voiced frustration over the lack of community response to the Middlefield permit fee dispute and potential attorney costs, while praising the Board for improved collaboration and communication compared with previous years.

Adjournment

Dr. Darcy made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Cowan, to adjourn the meeting.

All in favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Moore, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Viens, and Mrs. Cowan. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Meghan Shortell-Fratantonio