

**COVENTRY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
APPROVED MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING OF THURSDAY, AUGUST 31, 2006**

Members Present: Milton S. Natusch, Chairman  
Richard Williams, Vice-Chairman  
Jennifer Beausoleil  
Craig Couture  
Larry Pietrantonio  
Cheryl Trudon

Members Absent: Kathleen Ryan, Secretary

Administrators Present: Dr. Donna Bernard, Superintendent  
Sherry Holmes, Fiscal Services Director  
Judith Richard, PSSS Director

Also present were Paul Noel, Director of Physical Plant and Facilities; Charles Britton, CHS Principal; Troy Hopkins, CNH Assistant Principal; Marie Castle-Good, CNH Principal; Carol Brigham, Food Services Director; and a couple of citizens. No newspapers were represented. All motions are directed to the Coventry Board of Education.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

By: Chairman M. Natusch Time: 7:35 p.m.  
Place: Administration Building Meeting Room

**II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman M. Natusch.

Chairman M. Natusch inquired if the Board had additional agenda items; there were none.

**III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS**

No one came forward; the Audience of Citizens was closed.

**IV. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

A. Information: Opening of the 2006-2007 School Year

Dr. Bernard said that the asbestos project has been completed on schedule and even ahead of schedule. She said the rooms “look lovely.” She handed out enrollment information. This year there are two things of note – last year enrollment was 2,109, this year enrollment is 2,075. There are usually 156 children in kindergarten, while this year there are 123. Other figures are “business as usual.” Drop-out figures reflect that students are staying in school.

Dr. Bernard said that teachers are now recognized with pins at 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, and 40 years of service. She said there are 14 new staff members. She thanked Paul Noel for having facilities in “excellent condition” for the start of the new school year.

J. Beausoleil said that according to her kids, the cafeteria food is a “vast improvement” from the past.

#### B. Information: Visiting Teacher from Qingdao, China

Dr. Bernard said that she was pleased to report that Xiuying Chen, a senior English teacher from Qingdao, China, will be visiting Coventry for ten days. She handed out information and a tentative schedule. The goal eventually is to exchange students. She said that K. Ryan will be going to China on exchange in November.

#### C. Information: New District Curriculum Initiative

Dr. Bernard noted that Coventry has been without a curriculum coordinator for some time. She said she has been working on a web-based curriculum alignment project. This will be a three-to-five-year plan at minimum. It uses teachers’ units and works with them to meet state standards.

Mr. Britton said that Dr. David Squires, a professor at SCSC, developed this project. Mr. Britton said that this one initiative, more than any other in the last six years that he has been here, has the potential for great impact. It will drive the technology initiative. Eventually everything will be on-line for parents to see as well. The teachers started working on this in the summer. He showed an example by the new physics teacher. He said it allows for block-like comments from other teachers or parents.

Dr. Bernard said this is “an incredible strategy” for new teachers. Mr. Britton said the alignment section is “incredible.” Dr. Bernard said that within five years, every course at every level will be on-line. We are starting with horizontal agreement for now and will progress to vertical agreement.

Mr. Britton said that administrators could arbitrate to eliminate gaps and overlaps. Dr. Bernard said that the best decisions are made at the teaching level with perhaps a facilitator in the room. J. Beausoleil asked about vertical assessment between the grade levels, and Mr. Britton said that this could definitely be done. Mrs. Castle-Good said that a “common language” is important, and that is what this initiative will provide.

Dr. Bernard said that so far only a few other districts in Connecticut are working with this four-year-old initiative.

C. Trudon asked if students could go on-line to access tests, and Dr. Bernard replied that access codes would be in place. L. Pietrantonio said that this initiative will make it much easier for parents to see what’s going on in the classroom. Dr. Bernard said that there is room enough for variation but also room for accountability. Mr. Britton said that the high school teachers are “ecstatic” about the program. Mrs. Richard said that it will have a positive impact on test scores.

R. Williams asked what other districts do for coordination of curriculum, and Dr. Bernard said that there are often curriculum committees, a curriculum person or persons, coaches, etc. There was a brief discussion about what is in place now in Coventry. L. Pietrantonio said that the salary for the curriculum director, who only stayed for five months when he was hired five years ago, was \$70,000 just for the first year. This was not affordable for the town of Coventry.

Dr. Bernard said that this on-line initiative will cost us \$30,000 for start-up, with a cost of \$750-\$1,000 per year thereafter. The cost came out of staff development, and is within budget constraints. J. Beausoleil said that this initiative would allow more consistency between “teams.”

#### D. Information: NEASC Reaccreditation Visit, Report Overview – C. Britton

Dr. Bernard said that her expectation is that a balanced curriculum will address at least 50% of the recommendations.

Mr. Britton said that the process is not over yet. The Commission of Public Secondary Schools will meet sometime this fall, evaluate all schools evaluated last spring, and will make decisions. We will most likely be assigned “Student Accreditation with Warning.” There will be some things to be addressed. These standards are brand-new and were first applied to schools evaluated last year. NEASC feels we are headed in the right direction, and they’re confident that we will meet the standards. Their advice is “Keep going because you’re not there yet.”

Mr. Britton said that we agree with six out of the seven reports. We take some exception to the Instruction Standard report. Mr. Britton pointed out several inconsistencies in the report, where different sub-committees came to very different conclusions. He said that the committee chair did admit there were inconsistencies. He said he is required to submit two, five, and seven year progress reports, the last one being preparation for the next visit. He said he is confident that 80% of the concerns will be addressed within two years, and 90% within five years. Several recommendations – on pages 75, 76, and 85 – are dependent on increased funding; for example, on page 85, 1-6 out of 8 can’t be met.

Chairman M. Natusch thanked Mr. Britton for his report overview.

J. Beausoleil said that a lot of problems identified were probably present before Mr. Britton arrived and are not “easy fixes.” Dr. Bernard said that ten years ago, there were problems related to facilities, which drove the building project. The standards are much different now than before. Mr. Britton said that the school “looks entirely different” than it did ten years ago. We’ve come a long way. J. Beausoleil said that a common theme is a lack of inter-departmental coordination and communication, and that she’s looking forward to seeing these things resolved. She asked how it would be possible for a teacher to not participate in incorporating the new school-wide expectations into their curriculum, and Mr. Britton said that this has been a problem with a “significant minority.” Those who have been reticent are becoming more cooperative, however. J. Beausoleil asked about the lack of electives, saying that there are only a small number of students in “virtual classrooms.” She asked how offerings can be expanded, considering budget constraints. Mr. Britton replied that the virtual high school and independent study program will help. He said he is also “pushing in a major way” to have students go to Manchester Community College for tuition-free courses.

Dr. Bernard said that are applying for a Perkins Grant to expand engineering courses at the high school. We will find out in January or February if we have the grant.

Mr. Britton said there are two main problems with our technology: one is a lack of student access to computers in the lab and library, and the other is that our electronic portfolio continues to be quantitative rather than qualitative. The portfolio should improve over time. In response to an inquiry by C. Trudon, Dr. Bernard said that a para-educator staffs the library; no certification is necessary. Although a volunteer could staff it, we would need to have someone skilled with



**MOTION: To approve the June 29, 2006 minutes as submitted.**

**By: L. Pietrantonio**

**Seconded: R. Williams**

**Result: Motion passes 5-0-1 (M. Natusch abstains)**

Information on page 5 of the minutes, although an accurate rendering of what was stated at the June 29, 2005 meeting, is incorrect. The administration reported that students who engage in an extra-curricular activity that requires travel five or more times per school year using district funds will be required to pay \$25 for each such extra-curricular activity.

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

None.

## **IX. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Discussion: Policy Adoption – Policy #5133 Board of Education Student Representative  
(warn for adoption on 9/14/06)

Dr. Bernard said that this policy represents the consensus of the Board.

**MOTION: To warn Policy #5133 Board of Education Student Representative for adoption on 9/14/06.**

**By: L. Pietrantonio**

**Seconded: C. Trudon**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously.**

B. Policy Revision – Policy #5140.1 – Wellness (warn for revision on 9/14/06)

Dr. Bernard said that normally policies go to the Policy Committee, but the timely nature of this matter requires us to address it now. This is the new nutrition legislative initiative. We will follow the State of Connecticut's Public Act 06-63, a very comprehensive nutrition mandate not to sell anything not listed in their document. Compliance is voluntary. We get an extra ten cents per lunch from the state for our compliance. Dr. Bernard went over some key points. Items in vending machines must comply at all times, both during and after school. We can still sell pies, etc. to adults, however. We can't sell baked goods or chocolate bars on the school campus. After-school events authorized by the Board are exempt. Dr. Bernard said she has to sign off on this by September 15.

**MOTION: To warn Policy #5140.1 – Wellness – for revision on 9/14/06.**

**By: L. Pietrantonio**

**Seconded: J. Beausoleil**

Discussion. Dr. Bernard said that page 2, second paragraph, #2 should read:

“Generally not deny physical activity as a part of our student management efforts.”

(The word “generally” has been added.)

**MOTION: To amend Motion to warn Policy #5140.1 – Wellness – for revision on 9/14/06, including the Superintendent's recommended change on page 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, #2: “Generally not deny physical activity as a part of our student management efforts.”**

**By: L. Pietrantonio**

**Seconded: J. Beausoleil**

Discussion. J. Beausoleil asked about the Student Health Council, and Carol Brigham, Director of Food Services, said that students on the council worked

on creating the wellness guidelines. She asked how snacks provided by parents fit in, and Dr. Bernard replied that they don't. However, if teachers collect money for kindergarten snacks, or if money is collected for pizza parties, these instances fall under the guidelines. Chairman M. Natusch asked about after-hours food, and Dr. Bernard said that Mr. Noel has to revise his form to ask if things will be sold to students at after-school events.

**Result: Motion passes unanimously.**

## **X. REPORT OF BOARD MEMBERS**

### **A. Information: Transportation Committee Report – M. Natusch, S. Holmes**

Chairman M. Natusch said he met with Mrs. Holmes and R. Williams about the bus routes. Bus routes are the same, and there are no problems with parents. Mrs. Holmes said that overall, opening day went well. She is dealing with one issue now and hopes to resolve it soon. She said that the lake area bus driver will now be able to bring Windham Tech students home, a "huge win" for a lot of parents who wanted to get their Tech students home earlier.

### **B. Information: Fiscal Committee Report – R. Williams, S. Holmes**

R. Williams asked that the report be tabled until the next meeting.

J. Beausoleil asked if we were locked in for gas and diesel yet. Mrs. Holmes said we are still waiting until the right opportunity – a price closer to \$2.00 per gallon. She said we can't use low-sulfur diesel because it is incompatible with the older busses. J. Beausoleil asked about line items on the budget, and Mrs. Holmes said a price of \$1.4181 for heating oil and \$1.4458 for diesel. She said she had "bumped it up a little." She said that the tanks were topped off at the end of the last fiscal year at a price of \$1.4181. They just got diesel fuel today for \$2.30 per gallon.

L. Pietrantonio asked why everyone had received a large amount of paperwork. Dr. Bernard said that, generally speaking, questions regarding invoices are an administrative function and not a Board of Education policy. Although only R. Williams had asked for copies of invoices, it has been our policy to give copies to all Board members if one asked for information. She said that over the summer administration is allowed to pay these bills. She said that the time for Board members to comment is when the budget is being developed; once budget lines are authorized, "it's not a question."

### **C. School Building Committee Report – L. Pietrantonio**

L. Pietrantonio said that the abatement project was done on time and on budget. The schools look pretty good. The School Building Committee did a "really good job." He said that basically they met every other week during the summer to keep on top of things. There were some areas of stress when things slowed down, but we didn't have to invoke any penalties or fees. The abatement project still has \$14,000 to carry over for contingencies. The GHR tunnel is an unknown quantity until workmen actually crawl through the tunnels. He said the town has expressed interest in using the "excess" money for other projects.

L. Pietrantonio said that concerning the water project, we went with the low bidder, Lenard Engineering out of Mansfield. We have a scope meeting scheduled for September 28 at 6:30 p.m., before the Board meeting, to meet with the engineer. Dr. Bernard, Mrs. Holmes, and Paul Noel will

be there. Phase I will involve the location of the wells, well testing, and the volume of water. Phase II will be the actual construction of the wells, etc., once the State approves the drilling plan. One concern is that when the heavy well drilling trucks come in, there will be damage. We will try to do it when the ground is frozen or very dry. There will be inconveniences since school will be in session at that time and the well drilling is very noisy. We want to get ten gallons a minute. The appropriation is \$1.2 million. The principals should come to this meeting in order to understand what will be happening.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION: To adjourn the Board Meeting at 10:04 p.m.**

**By: L. Pietrantonio**

**Seconded: C. Trudon**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously.**

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Respectfully submitted,

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Susan S. Nimerowski  
Board Clerk

September 14, 2006

Approved