

**COVENTRY BOARD OF EDUCATION
APPROVED MINUTES
MEETING OF THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2008**

Members Present: Larry Pietrantonio, Chairman
Kathleen Ryan, Vice Chairman
Cheryl Trudon, Secretary
John Barrett
Mary Kortmann
Michael Whitham
Richard Williams

Also Present: Fred North, BOE Student Representative

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

Also present were Judith Richard, Pupil and Staff Support Services Director; Troy Hopkins, CHS Principal; Michele Mullaly, CNH Principal; Scott Sadinsky, CNH Assistant Principal; David Petrone, GHR Principal; Raymond Grasso, CGS Principal; Scott Rhoades, CNH Art Teacher; Carla Kennedy, Challenge & Enrichment Teacher; Judy Burr, CHS Guidance Counselor; Gerilyn Ferguson, CHS Guidance Counselor; Heather Mackintosh, CHS Guidance Counselor; Krystina Schulze, CHS Guidance Counselor Intern; a few CHS students; and a few citizens. The Chronicle newspaper, NBC30 News, and Fox61 News were represented. All motions are directed to the Coventry Board of Education.

I. CALL TO ORDER

By: Chairman, L. Pietrantonio Time: 7:31 p.m.
Place: Administration Building Conference Room

II. SALUTE THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by L. Pietrantonio.

III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Jen Beausoleil of 221 Eastview Drive said, in view of recent events, she thanked the Board for having administrators and staff in place who have the safety of our students as a priority. She said the students were safe and right decisions were made in that regard.

IV. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

MOTION: To move agenda item IV. C – “Information: Capt. Nathan Hale School Update” to first under the Report of the Superintendent, due to the size of the audience and the media present tonight.

By: C. Trudon Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: Motion passes unanimously.

C. Information: Capt. Nathan Hale School Update

Dr. Bernard began by saying she was pleased to be at the meeting and to report to the Board and the Public that all of the students related to the events of March 6 are fine. She presented her report to the Board, which noted positive items and selected items for recommended future refinement. She said there are many comments to be made regarding March 6. She continued that the staff at the Capt. Nathan Hale School

handled the situation with the greatest expertise. She said, lockdowns are not practiced routinely and it was done with the greatest of skill, as if the schools had been practicing for many years. She named a few of the many positive notes surrounding the situation: it occurred right at the close of school and parents were very patient as they waited for students to be dismissed; the bus company (1st Student) had students home in a timely manner; a press release was provided as a collaborative statement with the school and police divisions; the school Principal's letter of information to parents was well received; and the cooperation between the town agencies and the schools was excellent.

Dr. Bernard named a few of the recommendations for refinement surrounding the situation: a town-wide debriefing has been called to further coordinate efforts and to help refine a complex situation; all personnel (town and school) assisting with a critical situation wear name badges for appropriate identification; the site-based crisis team members will have further clarification of their roles and responsibilities; staff and parents will need information in a more rapid manner; and schools will continue to practice lockdown drills.

Dr. Bernard continued that students in Coventry and everywhere are surrounded by a multi-billion dollar pharmaceutical culture. She said they need to recognize the dangers of ingesting chemicals that are not for a personal assigned medical use. She added students were more worried about mom being called than if they were going to be harmed by what they had taken. She reiterated that the students are up and healthy and well and that staff handled the situation well.

A. Information: "Coventry Pride" Festival of Trees Project – David Petrone, Carla Kennedy, and Manchester Public Schools' Representatives

Dr. Bernard introduced Mr. Petrone and asked him to speak about the Festival of Trees Project. Mr. Petrone said his first experience with the project was when he was at Manchester Public Schools and it was a community service project for him. When he started in Coventry at the middle school, he thought it would be an excellent means to promote diversity with Coventry students. He said this year the Capt. Nathan Hale School was included once more along with the G. H. Robertson School. He introduced the teachers and students from Manchester schools who came to the meeting as partners in the project.

Mr. Petrone introduced Mr. Rhoades, who spoke about the teachers in Manchester and his appreciation of the opportunity to work with them on this project. He explained the Festival of Trees project was as a fundraiser for the Wadsworth Athenaeum. He said every year it is exciting for the students to go and see what the trees sell for. He said this year the students made a quilt, which was purchased by the Director of the Wadsworth and that was very special for the students. He showed pictures of the students making the quilt and then the trip to Hartford to see it. The trip included a visit to the Old State House, where they learned many things.

Ms. Kennedy spoke next about the Fox61 Student News story the Challenge & Enrichment Students filmed about the Festival of Trees project and the quilt the students made. She was very happy to tell the Board she found out the story will be broadcast on Fox61. She then showed the story clip.

Dr. Bernard and the Board thanked the students and teachers for their hard work on this very important project.

B. Information: Coventry High School Guidance Department Presentation

Dr. Bernard introduced Mr. Hopkins who introduced the high school's guidance department. He said they are the best resource in town.

Each member of the Guidance Department talked to different slides in a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation included information on the school counselor's role; the Guidance Department Philosophy & Mission; school counseling programs; transition into high school; focus of the sophomore year; appropriate college and career information; parent information; and the GPA & class rank system – to name just a few.

CHS seniors, Emily Messino and Allison Christensen were present to talk about their positive experiences with the Guidance Department.

Emily stated she had encouragement from the Guidance Office in many areas. She said they were always there to help and were persistent in reminding her to get things done on time. She added, she knew where she was going by the end of January and it was because of the Guidance Department that she was accepted into college.

Allison relayed her story to the Board. She said a month or two into her senior year she realized she had to make some quick decisions regarding college. She said Ms. Schultz was very helpful and really pushed her to get things done. She said if it wasn't for Ms. Schultz she wouldn't have been able to do it all. She thanked the Guidance Department for all of their efforts on her behalf.

M. Kortmann stated her concern over the weighted GPA as many scholarship applications specifically require that information. She also wanted to know when the denominator for the class rank is finalized. She said some schools, such as UCONN, give out scholarships specific to the top 10% of the graduating class. Dr. Bernard agreed that there should be an authentic number by the seventh semester. Gerilyn Ferguson said there was a software glitch this fall with enrollment figures, but that has been worked out.

M. Kortmann was also concerned with students' inclusion into the Honor Society. She said other schools use the weighted GPA for inclusion.

M. Kortmann wanted to know the number of students who are attending Community Colleges who had to take remedial courses. Dr. Bernard said this question would be added to the Alumni Survey. In addition, Judy Burr stated that the English Department is communicating with Manchester Community College regarding this topic.

M. Kortmann wanted clarification regarding the 99% graduation rate for 2007, which was stated on a recent NCLB report. She said she knew of 11 students who did not walk on graduation day and wanted to know what happened to them. Dr. Bernard answered that it could be a variety of possibilities; a transfer to VRABE is just one. In addition, Dr. Bernard said Alison Locke in her office has answered and clarified this question in a number of emails. She continued that Alison has met with state to verify information. Mr. Petrone spoke up and confirmed he spoke with the state on the same topic and the figure is accurate. M. Kortmann finished by saying she is worried there are students who are not making it at Coventry High School and maybe this was not being recognized as an issue. Dr. Bernard responded that there are many variables and many responses are being looked at, including Mr. Hopkins' recommendation of a Career Pathways teacher. She said this alone is an acknowledgement of challenges with some students.

K. Ryan asked, regarding the alumni survey, could the district add a question which would ask of the college students who had to take remedial courses – when did they decide to go to college. Dr. Bernard said she would find a way to add that to the survey. She continued that the home is the most important place for preparation for college and the students who are encouraged at home take the more rigorous courses in high school to prepare for college. She said some students are at a disadvantage because there is no college “talk” in the home.

M. Whitham wanted to know if the simple things are done by counselors, such as counseling a student on the right college and the right major. G. Ferguson responded yes, and it starts early in their high school career.

C. Trudon asked when students get to use the software that was noted in the presentation. Ms. Mackintosh responded mostly during the Guidance Enrichment periods.

C. Trudon said she is worried about high school students not bringing home information for parents. She suggested having a series of informational workshops for parents, starting very early, which would walk them through all of the steps.

Dr. Bernard said she is proud that we are part of the Advanced Placement grant provided through the CBIA. She said this grant will help to drive many agendas including college preparation.

A discussion ensued about what classes are weighted and how that is figured.

M. Whitham asked how the weighted grade is figured. Ms. Ferguson said she would provide those calculations.

V. CONSENT AGENDA (VOTE: One vote for all items.)

- A. Approve CNH March 25 Field Experience to Sturbridge, MA
- B. Approve GHR April 25 Field Experience to Sturbridge, MA
- C. Approve CNH May 28 and June 3 Field Experiences to Worcester, MA
- D. Approve GHR September 2008 Field Experience to Ivoryton, CT

MOTION: To approve all items on the Consent Agenda as listed.

By: K. Ryan

Seconded: C. Trudon

Result: Motion passes unanimously.

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

VOTE: Approve Minutes of February 28, 2008

MOTION: To Approve the Minutes of February 28, 2008

By: M. Kortmann

Seconded: K. Ryan

Result: Motion to approve the minutes passes 5-0-2 (Barrett and Williams abstain).

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. VOTE: Annual Non-Renewal of Listed Teachers

MOTION: That the contract of employment of teachers, named on the attached list, not be renewed for the following year upon its expiration at the end of the current 2007-2008 school year, and that the Superintendent of Schools is directed to advise such persons in writing of this action.

By: M. Kortmann Seconded: C. Trudon

J. Barrett asked for clarification. He wanted to know if some of the teachers could have been tenured at a different district. Dr. Bernard responded, yes they may have been tenured elsewhere previously, but have not been tenured under Coventry's Agreement.

Result: Motion passes unanimously.

B. Discussion and VOTE: Town Council Insurance Advisory Committee Reappoint Paul Noel as the Board of Education Representative to Serve on this Committee

MOTION: To reappoint Paul Noel to the Town Council Insurance Advisory Committee.

By: K. Ryan Seconded: M. Kortmann

M. Whitham asked what the role of the representative was. L. Pietrantonio responded that they advise or make recommendations to the Council; it is not a "voting" committee.

Result: Motion passes unanimously.

C. Discussion and VOTE: Town Council Cable Television Advisory Committee Reappoint Kathie Elliott as the Board of Education Representative to Serve on this Committee

MOTION: To reappoint Kathie Elliott to the Town Council Cable Television Advisory Committee.

By: K. Ryan Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: Motion passes unanimously.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session for discussion related to the Superintendent's Evaluation..

MOTION: Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session for discussion related to the Superintendent's Evaluation at 9:15 p.m.

By: K. Ryan Seconded: C. Trudon

Result: Motion passes unanimously.

XII. OPEN SESSION

VOTE: The Board will return to open session.

The Board returned to Open Session at 9:29 p.m.

L. Pietrantonio asked that two items be added as future agenda items: the Advanced Placement Grant and Video/Broadcasting of Board of Education meetings.

It was the consensus of the Board to open for discussion agenda item IV. C – “Information: Capt. Nathan Hale School Update.”

R. Williams stated with the media present tonight everything was handled with grace and dignity.

J. Barrett asked for clarification of the timeline of events on March 6, specifically when the situation was first recognized, to when the EMS were called. Dr. Bernard said she did not have those specific documents available, but there were administration present throughout.

J. Barrett stated his concern regarding the lockdown involving the two schools and the communication between the two schools, specifically surrounding dismissal procedures. Dr. Bernard responded this was talked about in the Administrative Debrief and they will continue to look at coordination of efforts.

J. Barrett noted concern surrounding what is told to the public. He said there was no communication by the EMS at all to the parents who were waiting outside. He said it was difficult to get any information.

Dr. Bernard stated she is working collaboratively with the Chief of Police and the Town Manager and an agenda will be set when debriefing with the town-wide systems.

L. Pietrantonio agreed and said there has to be a clear chain of command, specifically when calling a lockdown. He said he would like to see a written procedure, which is agreed upon by the Superintendent, the Police, and the Fire Departments. In addition, L. Pietrantonio voiced his concern about cell phone use in the schools. He said it provided an avenue for bad or misinformation to get out.

Dr. Bernard said there are many things that will be addressed and lockdowns will be rapidly and frequently practiced. She said she will update the Board again, following the system-wide debrief meeting. It was agreed the Board would look at updating related policies at that time.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn the Board meeting at 10:15 p.m.

By: K. Ryan

Seconded: C. Trudon

Result: Motion passes unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberlee Michaud
Board Clerk

March 27, 2008
Approved