

**COVENTRY BOARD OF EDUCATION
APPROVED MINUTES
MEETING OF THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2008**

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

Members Absent: Michael Whitham

Administrators Present: Dr. Donna Bernard, Superintendent
Sherry Holmes, Fiscal Services Director
Judith Richard, Pupil & Staff Support Services

Also present were Marybeth Moyer, CGS Principal; David Petrone, GHR Principal; Michele Mullaly, CNH Principal; Scott Sadinsky, CNH Assistant Principal; Troy Hopkins, CHS Principal; Gina Olearczyk, Teacher on Assignment; several citizens; and several CHS students.

I. CALL TO ORDER

By: Chairman, L. Pietrantonio at 7:34 p.m.
Place: Administration Building Conference Room

II. SALUTE THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by L. Pietrantonio

After the Pledge, L. Pietrantonio asked for a Moment of Silence in remembrance of the events of September 11, 2001. A moment of silence was held.

III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Pam Sewell of Flanders Road said she had a quick question regarding special education students and wanted to confirm the number of “outplaced” students. Dr. Bernard replied that Ms. Richard would include that in her presentation this evening.

Ms. Sewell was very concerned about the minutes and how vague they were. In particular, she had attended the Transportation Committee meeting in August where she believed it was stated the Committee would forward the routes to the Board for approval. She said she reviewed the minutes from the August 28 Board of Education meeting and did not see where the Board addressed the routes at the meeting. She wanted to know if the routes had ever been approved or if there had been any changes since school started. She wanted to know if the Board even reviewed the routes. In addition, she commented on the Board’s “abbreviated” agenda. She said she is concerned that Board members cannot speak at meetings because the Report of Board Members section has been removed from the agenda. She said she would also like to see the communications to the Board listed on the agenda. L. Pietrantonio stated that the agenda has not changed and the

minutes have not changed. He added that by law only the motions need to be posted for the public. Ms. Sewell said the Board should try and tell the public as much as they can.

J. Barrett asked if Report of Board Members could be added to the agenda and the Transportation Committee minutes be discussed. L. Pietrantonio stated a motion would be needed.

MOTION: To add Report of Board Members

By: J. Barrett Seconded: R. Williams

Result: Motion passes unanimously.

L. Pietrantonio stated this would fall before the Executive Session.

Audrey Smith of 861 Dunn Road spoke as a representative of the Bolton Coventry Lyman Co-op Hockey Team Booster Club. She said she was present this evening to talk to the Board about fundraising. She continued that Coventry is the largest school that participates in the hockey team, including having the most players on the team, but Coventry is not funding the team. She said both of the other schools help in funding. She said the booster club is not asking for a lot of money, but the fee for the families is quite large and she is requesting that Coventry consider funding the team.

Catalina Veerasammy, 104 Hannah Lane said she was present to express her concern about the students riding to and from school on buses that are incredibly overcrowded. She said her son rides on bus 15 where they have to triple up and there is a child on the floor, which is unacceptable. She requested the Board do something immediately to rectify the situation. C. Trudon asked if the ride was equally crowded to and from school and if it was a middle school bus. Ms. Veerasammy responded yes.

IV. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

A. Information: "Coventry Pride" – Superintendent Long-term Goals & Annual Objectives 2008-2009.

Dr. Bernard began by saying the goals for 2008-09 have been developed by the Administrative Council and she was presenting them this evening for public review. (The Goal document is attached to the minutes.) She reminded the Board that the same five categorical areas were the basis for the goals and that the Administrator goals and their staff goals all support the achievement of these goals and objectives. She highlighted a couple of the goals from each section.

She stated that under these categorical areas, if the efforts are accomplished this year, it will have been Herculean steps forward for the system. She commended the administrators and staff who have the goals as their boiler plate.

R. Williams said it was nice to see the goals reflecting some of the challenges that the Board has been discussing.

J. Barrett asked if it was possible to ask questions at the next meeting in order to allow time to absorb all of the information. L. Pietrantonio said yes. It was said it would be placed under Old Business at the next meeting.

J. Barrett asked if these are the Superintendent's goals specifically, or are they the Board's goals for which they must take action. Dr. Bernard replied the goals are for the

Board's information only. She added it is a compilation of all of the data she has received from the Board and the public. J. Barrett asked if they were the Board goals. It was said no.

B. Information: Special Education Programs & Practices – Judith Richard

Dr. Bernard reminded the Board that this presentation came out of a Board meeting last year when it was requested to have Ms. Richard come back and talk specifically about Special Education.

Ms. Richard introduced Gina Olearczyk as a Teacher-on-Assignment working one day a week with the PSSS department. She stated that Ms. Olearczyk would give a brief presentation of an overview of the history of Special Education law. Ms. Olearczyk started with Key Terminology, she moved on to a brief Legislative History, she next summarized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement ACT (IDEIA), and finally reviewed the key provisions of the IDEIA.

Ms. Richard focused her comments on district outplacements and the cost of outplacements to the districts. She reviewed the different outplacement scenarios that the district is facing with DCF outplacements, the meaning of nexus towns, and the state mandated costs for which Coventry is responsible. She said the outplacement number is extremely fluid and can change on a daily basis.

There was discussion surrounding the Per Pupil Expenditure figure and how it can change mid-year. Ms. Holmes commented that it can change once the audit is done at the end of December 2008. J. Barrett wanted to know if it was possible to anticipate the increase to this figure and if that could be used when calculating the special education budget costs. L. Pietrantonio responded that actual, factual numbers needed to be used. J. Barrett said the Board should be able to use the anticipated figure as a gage for what will happen.

The Board continued to discuss the different DCF outplacement situations. Ms. Richard reminded the Board that she works hard to avoid outplacements at all levels.

J. Barrett asked about the Nexus Town and if it is different than Coventry does that mean there is funding coming in from another town.

Ms. Richard said yes the PSSS office will invoice the Nexus Town.

M. Kortmann asked where the Board sees the tuition that is received from the Nexus Town.

S. Holmes said you see it in the form of an increase to appropriations approved by the Town Council. She said in October she goes with the PSSS Director to the Town Council with a list of figures and all of the towns from which Coventry will be receiving tuition. The Town Council approves the increase to appropriations. She said the tuition comes in directly to offset the salaries that are already in place in the budget for the special education services related to those students.

J. Barrett asked if this was a "reimbursement" for money that has been expended. Ms. Holmes said yes.

The Board discussed the costs of pupils for which Coventry receives tuition and the appropriation increases due to the tuition.

J. Barrett asked for a scenario in writing to help the Board understand how the entire process works. R. Williams suggested that last year be used as an example. Ms. Holmes said she would comply.

J. Barrett asked if the new autism program at CGS was going to be addressed this evening. Ms. Richard gave a brief history of how the autism program came to happen.

J. Barrett said a problem exists when at one time it was said this school was bulging and now there is room to add something new by giving up two classrooms. J. Barrett wanted to know if the Board had voted on accepting this program.

J. Barrett said it was inappropriate that he had to find out about the program, as a Board member, through a newspaper article. He said he was disturbed this was not brought to the Board before this school year and now the program has already begun.

R. Williams agreed that this is a third party program that was started without the Board's approval.

The Board discussed whether this constituted a curriculum change. Ms. Richard said since the program was not Coventry's program, it was not Coventry's curriculum.

Dr. Bernard said one will find an extensive history in this district of dozens and dozens of programs being implemented under the supervision of district staff in collaboration with outside agencies. She said if the Board wants every collaborative program to be brought before the Board for authorization, it would be a shift in past practice.

J. Barrett said he thought that would be appropriate. R. Williams said based on the focus on special education in the town, something of this magnitude should have been brought to the Board.

Dr. Bernard said if the Board would like to get agreement and say anytime there is a collaborative program using district resources the Board would need to authorize it, the Board needs to be in agreement and make that decision.

C. Trudon said she does not want that to happen. She said Board members are not available for these types of programmatic decisions on a daily basis and the Administration is paid to make these decisions.

M. Kortmann agreed saying the Board pays staff to use resources wisely for the benefit of the students and the Board should let them do their jobs.

J. Barrett said it is a reasonable expectation of the Board to have these types of programs brought before the Board via a presentation and a question and answer session. He said it was unreasonable to hear about it from a newspaper article.

Dr. Bernard said the topic was addressed during the goal presentations a year ago.

The Board discussed when the item was or was not discussed within the last year.

It was said an update on the EASTCONN autism program would be brought before the Board after the first quarter.

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. VOTE: Approve Minutes of August 28, 2008

MOTION: To Approve the Minutes of August 28, 2008

By: K. Ryan

Seconded: C. Trudon

J. Barrett asked which version. K. Ryan stated the ones that were not posted for the public, but were 6 pages in length.

J. Barrett read the following requests for changes from M. Whitham:

To add a sentence to the end of the fourth paragraph, page 3, under approval of the June 26 minutes, "If there was any confusion the Board could always go back to the audio tape."

To add as the second sentence of the first paragraph on page 5, "He did not think it should come from school supplies and extra curricular activities."

C. Trudon said she did not remember M. Whitham saying that. She said, she is not saying he didn't, just that she did not remember it. She wanted to know who was going to go back and check the tapes for these types of things. Dr. Bernard said according to legal council, the Board could direct the secretary to review the tape or the Board can agree that it was said.

Result: Motion passes 5-0-1 (J. Barrett abstains).

B. Discussion: Approval of Minutes Procedure

R. Williams commented that the Fiscal Minutes were very detailed, which was very helpful. C. Trudon said it was because it the first time they were recorded by a clerk.

L. Pietrantonio said he has authorized Dr. Bernard to post for a clerk to take the subcommittee minutes. Dr. Bernard said it is very hard to find someone to fill these types of positions, but they will continue to try.

C. Trudon does not think minutes should be adjusted via emails, because the comments could be never ending. She continued saying the minutes are summaries and they are not word for word.

L. Pietrantonio said he has talked with the town about using the annex and scheduling the Board meetings there so the meetings would be broadcasted. He said he would bring it up with the Board for a vote in October. C. Trudon asked if we would be hiring a person to do the cameras. L. Pietrantonio said there would be a cost, but hopefully the town person will continue.

The conversation turned back to the procedures for minutes. L. Pietrantonio said the options are to post the motions for the public and have the Board approve the full version at their meeting, or continue as usually and post the full version for the public from the start.

L. Pietrantonio said his preference is to post the motions only on the website first and then the Board would approve the full minutes at the meeting which would be posted after approval.

R. Williams said the public has the right to see the full minutes as they have been.

Dr. Bernard commented saying she had done extensive research on minutes. She said she reviewed minutes of various towns throughout the state and there were two basic versions, one was to post only the motions and the actions, the other was to post the more detailed minutes after they are approved.

C. Trudon believed the Board should return to posting the full minutes because that is what is best for the public.

K. Ryan said there could be a compromise by posting the motions and action taken, with the understanding that the approved complete version will be posted after the board has approved them.

LP asked if there was a consensus.

C. Trudon, M. Kortmann, and R. Williams all said they would like the full minutes posted for the public as has been done.

K. Ryan restated her compromise but said she would submit to the Board's wish.

J. Barrett said he would like the "motion only" version posted first for the public and then the full version once the Board has approved them.

L. Pietrantonio said he would like the "motion only" version posted first also.

Since the consensus was three to three, L. Pietrantonio said he would acquiesce and the full version of the minutes would be posted for the public as has been the practice.

XII. REPORT OF BOARD MEMBERS

J. Barrett wanted to address the minutes of the Transportation Committee from August 6 and to reconcile the minutes with the fact that the Board did not approve the bus routes. He said he believed the minutes are extremely inaccurate in one specific area. He believed there was a motion at the meeting which was not recorded in the minutes. He said he made a motion at the meeting to recommend to the Board of Education to approve the bus routes as submitted and C. Trudon seconded and it was unanimously voted on.

Dr. Bernard said the routes are generally authorized by the Transportation Committee and they have not been in recent history presented to the Board as a whole. Dr. Bernard asked for clarification as to what the Committee discussed.

K. Ryan said she took the minutes on August 6 and sent them to the Committee members for review and comment. She said she thought the comments that were made by J. Barrett had been incorporated into the version that was posted. She continued saying she did not have the minutes in front of her and as such she was at a disadvantage.

J. Barrett handed a copy to K. Ryan. K. Ryan stated that it would have been good for the Board to know about this conversation ahead of time; as such the Chairman could have put it on the agenda.

J. Barrett said the minutes did not reflect any motions. K. Ryan said the sentence that was changed was that the Committee agreed to submit the school bus routes for publication. J. Barrett said that was not done by the committee. C. Trudon said she thought the committee had agreed to that.

J. Barrett continued saying the motion was removed from the original minutes and that it was a legal motion. He also said a subcommittee does not have the right to make any decisions for the Board of Education, but can only make recommendations.

The members continued to discuss the details of what happened at the Transportation Committee meeting.

Dr. Bernard said many committees do not go to the Board of Education for authorization, examples being the Expulsion Committee or the Grievance Committee. She said this is the history.

**Coventry Public Schools
 Superintendent of Schools
 Long-term Goals and Annual Objectives
 September 11, 2008**

1. **Improve outside resources, partnerships, and revenues, consistent with district goals.**
 - 1.1. Increase and define collaboration with outside agencies, group homes, magnet schools, Northeast Communities Against Substance Abuse (NECASA), State Department of Education (SDE), colleges and universities, as well as with the Regional Education Service Centers (RESC), including CREC and EASTCONN in order to further develop and enhance options for students needing alternative and/or supplemental educational services.
 - 1.2. Coordinate with the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) as we implement the new Coventry High School Project Opening Doors program for the purpose of increasing student participation in Advanced Placement coursework.
 - 1.3. Improve district collaborations with Manchester Community College in order to enhance vocational coordination for students, especially those with special needs.
 - 1.4. Collaborate further with Police, Fire, and Town agencies as we improve our emergency responsiveness, including simulations and face-to-face practice coordination.
 - 1.5. Expand efficiencies for special student needs servicing by developing further district and EASTCONN collaborative efforts, including a primary grade autism program.
 - 1.6. Continue to work with the town of Coventry and other agencies as we address preschool student needs and program development.
 - 1.7. Collaborate with outside safety compliance resources, including the National Incident Management System (NIMS), to ensure that critical safety procedures are developed and followed.

2. Promote efficient functioning and consistent refinement of subsystems within the larger organization.

- 2.1. Support the second year of a five year theme – “Quality Educational Environments: Responsive, Collaborative, Clearly Defined,” with staff development efforts that are focused, productive and goal related.
- 2.2. Expand the use of data at all levels, including the Effective Schools Surveys, Alumni Surveys, formative and summative student assessments, and the New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC) surveys to modify educational practices.
- 2.3. Implement processes and practices that further increase academic rigor.
- 2.4. Implement refinements in our Strategies that Get Results (SGR) focus including the Response to Intervention (RTI) programmatic improvements.
- 2.5. Continue school wellness committees and enhance their functioning in conjunction with state guidelines.
- 2.6. Redeploy staff and modify personnel role and function to enhance and increase instructional time and increase efficiencies and productivity.

2.7. Complete grades 6-12 schedule coordination and redesign for 2009-2010 implementation.

2.8. Complete water compliance projects.

3. Provide clear and regular communication to all constituencies, building a support base for school programs.

- 3.1. Continue to use a variety of formats to provide information and market Coventry Public Schools to both parents and other Coventry residents.
- 3.2. Continue development of our user-friendly district website, including parent information regarding website resources and e-mail response options.
- 3.3. Expand school programs and opportunities as resources for parents.
- 3.4. Further develop informational seminars, and BOE Coventry Pride meeting segments, including facility maintenance and curriculum initiatives.
- 3.5. Continue to develop practices that enhance customer service and welcoming school environments.
- 3.6. Improve public information regarding school budgets and financial transactions via further collaboration between town finance and school fiscal committees.
- 3.7. Continue to develop school/town collaborations, especially Youth Services and Parks and Recreation, in the interest of student programs.
- 3.8. Continue second year implementation and monitoring of MY Access!, in addition to the grade nine writing lab program at Coventry High School.

4. Implement programs and practices that improve student educational performance, ensuring that such practices align with state standards.

- 4.1. Continue to improve curriculum alignment coordination between classroom offerings, grades and departments, and state standards through A Balanced Curriculum program.
- 4.2. Further expand the assessment of and rigorous programs related to capable students, including the advanced placement Project Opening Doors program, middle school accelerated math and Future Problem Solvers.
- 4.3. Review data from the Connecticut Mastery Tests and Connecticut Academic Performance Tests to develop appropriate formative assessments to better inform instruction and insure student progress.
- 4.4. Increase the monitoring and the results analysis of our Academic Assist Programs.
- 4.5. Enhance school climate and student behavior management strategies to improve student results, including the expansion of before and after-school programs.
- 4.6. Provide more program alternatives for students, including online coursework and distance learning opportunities.

- 4.7. Increase *transition efforts between schools* (Pre-K to K, 2nd to 3rd, 5th to 6th, and 8th to 9th) in order to enhance resource utilization and student achievement.
- 4.8. *Implement a web based IEP program – IEP Direct* – in order to effectuate efficiencies within special education programs.
- 5. Improve the implementation and use of educational and administrative technology systems.**
 - 5.1. Increase the implementation and the integration of *curricular technology projects* and district technology support systems.
 - 5.2. Continue to further develop procedures and practices in conjunction with the Connecticut SDE with an ever *increasing series of mandates and reports*.
 - 5.3. Increase the *use of instructional technology*, including computer labs, in classroom technology, and smart boards, in order to enhance student achievement.
 - 5.4. Implement new *student portfolio system* at Coventry High School that is more consistent with expectations for student learning.
 - 5.5. Design and develop the District's next *Three year Technology Plan* for implementation for the 2009-2010 school year.
 - 5.6. Continue the use of a *web-based facility use protocol*, including all related training and public information aspects.
 - 5.7. Improve *computer access for grades K-5* students.
 - 5.8. *Use technology developed data* to track and be better informed regarding utility and facility expenses and usage.
 - 5.9. Further increase efficiencies and hold rising costs through a newly developed *transportation bid package*.