

**COVENTRY BOARD OF EDUCATION
APPROVED MINUTES
MEETING OF THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2009**

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

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

Also present were Troy Hopkins, CHS Principal; Paul Noel, Physical Plant and Facilities Director; and several citizens. All motions are directed to the Coventry Board of Education.

I. CALL TO ORDER

By: Chairman, L. Pietrantonio at 7:35 p.m.
Place: Town Hall Annex

II. SALUTE THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by L. Pietrantonio

III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Tom Pope of 683 Brigham Tavern Road talked about a recent meeting of the Town Council and how it was mentioned that the schools had been awarded a boat motor and trailer for the science department. He asked what happened to the boat motor and trailer. Dr. Bernard replied that the items were no longer in possession of the schools, but that she would get detailed information to Mr. Pope. In addition, Mr. Pope wanted to know if an inventory list of all assets were maintained by the schools; for instance he wanted to know if a list of purchases and disposals of special education equipment is maintained. Dr. Bernard replied yes.

L. Pietrantonio closed Audience of Citizens.

IV. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

- A. Information: Opening of the 2009-10 School Year
- B. Summer Update
- C. Upcoming Goal Reports: September 10 and 24, October 8 and 29

Dr. Bernard said the district is preparing for the 09-10 opening of school. She noted items in the Board Bulletin and the Board meeting packet related to staff development activities happening this week. She reviewed the technology workshops that were happening on Friday afternoon for staff. She continued with the concerns surrounding the H1N1 virus and handed out two letters, which will go home with students on Monday. She noted, the projections for H1N1 are large for people in collective areas. She said Mr. Noel and his staff have been brought up-to-date in cleaning procedures. She reviewed the other procedures related to possible H1N1 concerns. She mentioned there are 5 teachers new to the system. In addition she handed out information on

ARRA and noted that no money has been received yet, but the Board will be brought up-to-date when more information is learned.

Dr. Bernard continued, the school principals and staff have been working on ABC this summer and she reviewed the administrators fall goal presentation schedule.

Dr. Bernard introduced Mr. Noel to review the maintenance projects that have happened over the summer. Mr. Noel said the schools have been cleaned from top to bottom. In addition, he said there is a list of projects that were completed. He reviewed items which were completed at each site. At CHS compliance work on equipment in the wood shop was completed; the patio was finished in front of the high school as part of a boy scout eagle project; compliance work was done in the tech room; the art rooms had some work done; the nurses room had insulation installed in the wall; work was done from lightening strike damage; the air conditioning in the computer server room was improved; the weight equipment that was donated long ago, which was broken, was removed ago; a shed (built by students) was installed on the high school campus. At CNH the catch basin was replaced; the air handling units in the gym were replaced; a grease trap was rebuilt; air conditioning in the enrichment room was installed; At GHR pressure treated wood and related mulch and soil were replaced; At CGS they made a computer room; playground work was done. He noted that much of the outside ground work was done by public works. District-wide staff training for H1N1 was completed; energy audits began; additional compliance training was provided for all maintenance and custodial staff; broken glass was replaced; and usual summer items such as deliveries were completed.

Mr. Whitham asked about what is being done with the roofs. Mr. Noel said they are working on what to do “in the meantime” but the roof project paperwork is moving forward.

- V. **CONSENT AGENDA** (VOTE: One vote for all items)
- A. Accept Resignation of Erin Holub, CHS Teacher
 - B. Accept Resignation of Elizabeth Winterhalter, CHS Teacher

MOTION: To accept the consent agenda as noted.
By: M. Kortmann Seconded: K. Ryan
Result: Motion passes unanimously.

VI. **REPORT OF CHAIRMAN**

L. Pietrantonio said he hoped everyone had a nice summer. He noted that the RFQ for the roof project is being put together. He said the visits by the bidders will need to be coordinated with Mr. Noel’s office.

VIII. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A. VOTE: Approve minutes of June 11, 2009

MOTION: To approve the minutes of June 11, 2009
By: C. Trudon Seconded: M. Kortmann
Result: Motion passes unanimously.

B. VOTE: Approve minutes of June 25, 2009

MOTION: To approve minutes of June 25, 2009

By: R. Williams Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: The motion to approve the minutes passes 5-0-2 (Ryan and Whitham abstain).

XI. REPORT OF BOARD MEMBERS

A. Information: Transportation Committee Report – C. Trudon and S. Holmes

C. Trudon said the Transportation Committee did meet and approved bus routes for publication. She noted that representatives of the new transportation company M&J were present at the meeting. She said M&J was able to provide a greater number of larger busses, which will hold more students to help alleviate overcrowding. Mr. Williams asked about the larger busses. Mr. Barrett explained the larger busses and noted that it makes a significant difference. C. Trudon continued to review stops which were discussed at the meeting. Minutes from the meeting were in the packets for the members.

B. Information: Fiscal committee Update – C. Trudon and S. Holmes

C. Trudon said the June and July reports were reviewed at the Fiscal meeting and noted that all Board members received those reports. She noted the sample reports that will be produced for the new Food Services accounting. She said the town will monitor the revenue and Ms. Holmes' office will monitor expenses for that department. It was noted that the Food Services ended the year in "the positive."

R. Williams asked, regarding the Food Service reports, if they now included all of the expenses associated with the Food Service department. Ms. Holmes said yes, all should be included. They reviewed several accounts in detail and what would show on the reports in the near future. R. Williams commented that this report was a great start. Dr. Bernard noted that both Beth Pratt as the Food Service Coordinator and Scott Sadinsky as the District Food Service Liaison will come later in the fall to report details of the new program.

J. Barrett clarified that the propane and telephone expenses are in the Food Service account reports and asked if that will mean if the department will be fully self-sufficient. Dr. Bernard said it is the goal for 2009-10 to be fully self sufficient. J. Barrett asked if the Board would still subsidize those items as was projected in the BOE 09-10 budget. Ms. Holmes said the Food Service department would pay for those items. J. Barrett said the Board had a significant discussion on this and there was a 4-3 vote not to do that. Ms. Holmes replied that was for the 08-09 school year. R. Williams and J. Barrett both said, no, that was a discussion about going forward in 09-10. There was discussion among the group as to what was actually discussed and voted on in the past regarding these accounts. M. Whitham said the vote was taken, and the following month during the review of the minutes, it was stated by a couple of people that if they understood what the actual motion was on the floor, they would have voted differently. He said the minutes should be reviewed and perhaps another vote should be taken. He said the fear at the time was, if the Board put the burden on the department they couldn't balance their budget. He said the motion he put out was to transfer the money from where it is now into this bucket. He said he thinks that got missed in the vote. There was further discussion regarding which year held which burden and which accounts would possibly go over. L. Pietrantonio said the minutes would be checked.

J. Barrett noted the transfers and the dues and fees account and the amount of \$16,817 that was in excess and was transferred out. He said a total of \$35K for the year was transferred out of that account and it is very large amount that was not spent on dues and fees. C. Trudon said all of the accounts that had surpluses had such because no one was allowed to go anywhere or spend anything because the district was on critical spending. J. Barrett noted \$10K left in travel and asked if that was left for the same reason. Ms. Holmes said yes. J. Barrett said perhaps the Board could look closer at those accounts and manage them closer. C. Trudon said that is not how you would want to do it every year; it was a reaction to the circumstances we faced at the beginning of the year. K. Ryan said that is professional development money. C. Trudon said you do not want to continually eliminate that money.

M. Whitham said the transfer sheets from the year, and perhaps last year, will be looked at as the budget development process begins to see where the realistic numbers fall so that so many transfers do not need to be done. C. Trudon said every year you move in that direction, but you cannot account for the irregularities.

J. Barrett asked why the budget was \$60K over in utilities. Dr. Bernard said the decrease in use and the increase in rate is the issue. R. Williams said if the projections are that far off, it should be looked at sooner. The group discussed the utility billing cycles and summer expenses regarding utilities.

R. Williams noted the utility expenses for the 08-09 school year as being \$300K and the projection for the year being about the same. He asked how we could be off by \$30K in one month if we projected it semi accurately. The group discussed transfer amounts and projected amounts for 08-09. J. Barrett said we need to look at this year and that we are going to be in the hole already, because we have allocated the same amount for 09-10. J. Barrett made the request to the Fiscal Committee to look at the utility account and make a transfer sooner rather than later. C. Trudon said they would take it up at Fiscal.

Ms. Holmes noted, the position statement needed to be done first, before any transfers could be done. The group discussed what was needed first and when. C. Trudon said the topic would be brought up at Fiscal.

Mr. Noel noted that work has been done with spreadsheets which was not available when the budget was being put together, but now it can be included when the discussions are had this year.

M. Kortmann agreed saying that both the position statement, and the utility information that Mr. Noel has, need to be addressed when the conversation is had.

J. Barrett said the Social Security and Medicare accounts do not balance. He asked for clarification as to who pays into what accounts. Ms. Holmes explained the different employees, their statuses, and what they may or may not pay. Due to the complexity of this issue, Ms. Holmes said for the next Fiscal meeting she would have a document formed explaining payroll deductions.

J. Barrett asked about the Heat Energy transfer. Ms. Holmes said the oil tanks were topped off.

J. Barrett asked about the Student Transportation account. Ms. Holmes said magnet school transportation, special education, late busses, and other transportation expenses came in at the end of year. The group discussed different transportation items versus what was projected.

J. Barrett said the Board needs to take responsibility for its own budget. He said it is being left to the administration to handle the problem and not the Board. C. Trudon said the Fiscal Committee is fully aware and kept informed in advance of what the shortages are and from where it is going to come. J. Barrett said the Board was not allowed to make decisions on whether to spend the money, but had to instead cover expenditures that were already made.

J. Barrett noted the voucher supplement on July 23 and a particular transfer from the Board of Education to the CHS student activity fund. He said the high school dipped into the student activity account to pay for state festival participation fees for band and choir. He said his issue is not the amount or the activity. M. Kortmann said the place in the activity fund that the money probably came out of was the band booster support money, which is their right to utilize as needed. M. Kortmann said if things need to be paid quickly, the activity account check can be cut quickly and then they ask for reimbursement from the school. J. Barrett said that is interim borrowing. J. Barrett said this is just an example. He said he disagrees with this accounting practice. He continued the money should not come out of the student activity fund first. C. Trudon said it has to do with the timing. Ms. Holmes agreed saying the Board cannot cut checks at a moments notice, but the activity funds can. J. Barrett said if the Board has it budgeted, the invoice should come directly to the Board and be paid that way. He said this happens in several instances throughout the year and it is inappropriate. He said it happens with Travel too; people pay for it themselves and then we reimburse them and it shouldn't happen that way. He said it should not have to go through the third party. Dr. Bernard said most organizations only accept credit cards, which the district does not have. She said once an employee pays, they are reimbursed. She added that the administration is more than happy to answer any specific questions. M. Kortmann said it is an expense report, which is tracked with receipts.

K. Ryan noted that the accounts are audited yearly and if there was a problem with the procedure the auditors would certainly bring it to the attention of the Board.

J. Barrett asked what happened to the 08-09 \$3600 surplus. Ms. Holmes said it goes back to the town. He confirmed that the Board was not given the opportunity to address spending \$3600 specifically. C. Trudon said the Board was given every opportunity to make suggestions regarding any overage that was left.

M. Whitham said there are a few line items that need to be reset by doing transfers. He said we know they are going to be over; the chances are real high that they will be over. He said unemployment, student transportation possibly, and utilities for sure, should be reset at the next Fiscal meeting. He said that way they can be managed from this point on, so we are not chasing a number. In addition, he said he would also like a wish list set in priorities, so if there is extra money it would be spent on items on that list. He said then if there is money left at the end of the year it goes to the town, but at least we can hit the items like books for the kids, and athletic supplies.

J. Barrett said there is a surplus in library books and periodicals. C. Trudon said it could be a variety of reasons why that was not done.

VOTE: Approve Budget Transfers as Presented

MOTION: To approve the Budget Transfers as of June 30, 2009.

By: C. Trudon

Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: Motion passes 6-1 (Barrett against).

M. Whitham said some of these long conversations can be painful and can take us into the long hours of the night. He noted especially in the case of Food Services it is a perfect example of the back and forth dialog and we adopted some things. He said it turned out to be a quick turnaround; going deep in the red to coming out ahead. He said sometimes these conversations are good. L. Pietrantonio agreed, saying they are all good and he applauded Fiscal for what they've accomplished in the past two years.

As part of Report of Board Members, J. Barrett noted a document from October 2008 from the Superintendent's office which had recorded statistics of students' grades. He asked how some of those students were doing. Dr. Bernard asked for clarification as to what document he was referring. She said those answers could be addressed during Mr. Hopkins goal report. Mr. Barrett asked that the document be added as part of the record this evening.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session for discussion of the Custodian/Maintenance Negotiations

MOTION: Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session for discussion of the Custodian/Maintenance Negotiations with the Superintendent and the Fiscal Services Director Present at 9:03 p.m.

By: K. Ryan Seconded: C. Trudon

Result: Motion passes unanimously.

XIII. OPEN SESSION

The Board of Education returned to Open Session at 9:39 p.m.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 9:39 p.m.

By: K. Ryan Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: Motion passes unanimously.

Respectfully submitted:

Kimberlee Michaud
Board Clerk

September 10, 2009

Approved

Information for Questions Posed by Board Members

This past summer board members requested information on various issues relating to the 07-08 school year. Many staff members were involved in gathering this data which took over **14 hours** to complete. Below are explanations for each of the questions posed.

Questions:

- 1) The number of students per grade with a "D" average. (JB)
- 2) The number of students per grade with an "F" average. (JB)
- 3) The number of students held back this year to repeat the previous year's grade. (JB)
- 4) The number of students that are currently enrolled in the 3 to 6 o'clock after school program. Are any of these students not expulsion students? (JB)
- 5) Why is the enrollment smaller than in past years? (MK)

Answers:

#1 & #2: Due to complications in the MMS software and staff restructuring, it was difficult to get an accurate count of students with "D" and "F" averages. Letter grades are not used at Coventry Grammar School and report cards are hand written at George H. Robertson School, so this data could not be obtained for grades K – 5. MMS does not allow for computing the number of "D's" and "F's" per student. Instead, the Grade Point Average was used at Capt. Nathan Hale School and Coventry High School to determine which students had a "D" or "F" average. Capt. Nathan Hale School's GPA is based on a 100 point scale. Students that had a GPA of 69 (D+) or below were counted: 11 eighth graders, 3 seventh graders, and 0 sixth graders. Coventry High School's GPA is based on a 4.0 scale. Students that had a GPA of 1.33 (D+) or below were counted: 9 freshmen, 11 sophomores, 5 juniors, and 0 seniors.

#3: There were 9 students in total who were held back in grades Kindergarten through Eighth Grade – K = 4; 1st = 1; 2nd = 1; 3rd = 1; 7th = 1; 8th = 1. At the high school 45 students did not obtain the required credits needed for the next grade. The administration and guidance have worked together, along with input from consultants at the state, for a more consistent student reporting system. Beginning this year, a student's grade level will correspond to his/her Year of Graduation (YOG) instead of credits. There is a 1.5 credit buffer to move on to the next grade. For example, students must have at least 5.5 credits to move to the 10th grade. All students with 4+ credits will be placed in a sophomore homeroom even if they haven't quite reached the 5.5 requirement. This will encourage students to get up to speed

and graduate with their class. In most cases, these students will gain enough credits by the end of the first semester to "officially" move to the next grade. Students with less than 4 credits will remain in a freshmen homeroom and their YOG will be revised. This system is a better way to keep track of students for state reporting and testing purposes. Staff will still be able to track whether a student is on pace by comparing their YOG with accumulated credits.

#4: As of September 2008 there were 11 students enrolled in the After School Program. These students were there for a variety of reasons: 4 had been expelled from school; 3 are "504" students; and 4 students were placed in the program through a PPT – IDEA – 45 IAES day placement due to disciplinary issues. This program is one of the many instructional programs in place at Coventry Public Schools for students who require both academic and behavioral interventions beyond the scope of the classroom.

#5: Coventry's enrollment for October 2007 was 2,013. Looking at a 10-year enrollment history (1998 – 2007) there have been peaks and valleys, the highest at 2,126 in 2004 and lowest at 1,945 in 1998. The average enrollment over the 10-year period was 2,059. Looking at the State Department of Education enrollment projections for Coventry, we are well above the projection of 1,785 for 2007-08. Also, the construction project calculated enrollment to be at 1,946 for 2005 (the latest year recorded). We were well above that projection at 2,107 in 2005. With the universal access legislation we can expect our numbers to decrease slightly over the next few years.