

**COVENTRY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
UNAPPROVED MINUTES  
MEETING OF THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 2010**

Members Present: Larry Pietrantonio, Chairman  
Cheryl Trudon, Vice Chairman  
Mary Ann Emanuele, Secretary  
Jennifer Beausoleil  
Mary Kortmann  
Mark Malcolm

Members Absent: John Barrett

Administrators Present: Dr. Donna Bernard, Superintendent  
Gregg Blackstone, Business Manager

Also present were David Petrone, Capt. Nathan Hale School Principal; Troy Hopkins, G. H. Robertson School Principal; Michele Mullaly, Coventry High School Principal; and Marybeth Moyer, Coventry Grammar School Principal.

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**

There were none.

**IV. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

Information: Opening School Staff Development and report of SDE Commissioner's Superintendent Meeting

Dr. Bernard stated staff have had a long and very productive opening day. In the packet was the welcome back letter Dr. Bernard sent to the staff, and the new teacher orientation schedule. New teachers gave positive feedback on the orientation program. All teachers and para-educators, today, worked this afternoon with the SRBI (the state level matching the federal level of RTI). The keynote speaker for the morning, UCONN professor Dr. Gina Barreca, was excellent. Dr. Bernard said the staff would be in all day on Friday 8/27/2010 and then for a full day of school on Monday 8/30/2010.

Dr. Bernard moved on to the Commissioners meeting. Dr. Bernard spoke about the Educational Jobs Fund monies and that Coventry is slated to receive about 500,000. Dr. Bernard handed out a draft of options the administrative staff has developed on what can be done with the money. Option 1 is to not spend this year. Option 2 is to spend some money, \$153,000, this year and the rest next year. Option 3 is to spend it all this year. She also mentioned there will probably be 1.4 million dollars less that Coventry will receive in

funding when the ARRA is done. She opened up the draft proposals to the Board for discussion and comment.

C. Trudon asked if the money is guaranteed to be here next year if Coventry does not spend any of it this year. Dr. Bernard and Mr. Blackstone answered the money will be available next year; the money is available until September of 2012.

M. Malcolm asked for clarification on the \$1.4 million less in funding. M. Kortmann answered the \$1.4 million came to us as part of state ECS grant. She stated CT was flat funding it. \$1.2 million of this money actually comes from the Federal Government. It is not clear when the Federal Government takes away their \$1.2 million if the State of CT will fund the \$1.2 million. It is not known what money the state will send to Coventry next year. M. Kortmann guesses that the money from the state will be somewhere between \$8.4 million and \$9.6 million. She also stated that other ARRA money used for Title 1 and Special Ed, approximately \$213,000, will not be sent to Coventry.

J. Beausoleil stated that if Coventry spends some money to hire staff this year, and leaves some money to continue to fund those jobs next year, the staff may need to be cut when the money runs out. She does not advocate spending a large chunk this year. She would like to see a restoration some of the early intervention like reading and math to provide a foundation of the early grades that will help alleviate problems in the higher grades.

M. Malcolm asked if the FTE's listed under Option II were for the lower grades. Dr. Bernard answered the Reading Specialist was at the high school, the Math Support was 6-12, the .2 Math Assist is an increase at elementary school, the .2 Psychologist is at CGS, the .5 Technology Support (certified) is for grades 3-5 with a certified instructor. C. Trudon asked if the same person who was doing the job before was taking back this role. Dr. Bernard answered the staff would be a certified teacher and not a secretary. C. Trudon asked to confirm that the curriculum was the same but it would be taught by a certified instructor. Dr. Bernard answered yes.

M. Malcolm suggested the Board also take into consideration the benefits costs of hiring or increasing hours for staff. Some of the suggestions are an increase in hours and some would be new staff. Dr. Bernard stated that the benefits cost was not included in the estimate. She estimates a \$20,000 increase for benefits for items A, B, and F. The other positions are not benefited positions. M. Malcolm asked if this would be three new hires plus benefits. Dr. Bernard answered yes.

C. Trudon asked what item G School Improvement Support was. Dr. Bernard answered it was CALI work to increase testing scores, working with RTI and keeping out of not obtaining AYP and EASTCONN.

M. Kortmann asked if many high school students were forced to take study hall instead of a class because the class was full, and if so, could the money be used to create more sections for electives. Dr. Bernard stated that reading support would help by taking some of the students out of a study hall and placing them in reading support. J. Beausoleil stated that would not help if the student wanted to take a certain class, but was unable to because there was not a staff resource to teach the class. M. Mullaly stated that some of the freshman and sophomores might have been shut out of an elected class because the juniors and seniors were given priority. She stated that the students did receive the classes they wanted.

Dr. Bernard suggested the Board not do anything that is not sustainable. M. Kortmann asked about adding .2 teaching staff. Dr. Bernard asked M. Mullaly what classes could use more teaching staff. M. Mullaly mentioned they are very tight in AP Biology.

M. Emanuele asked how many students were enrolled for this school year. Dr. Bernard answered that school doesn't start until Monday, and we won't know for sure until then. M. Mullaly estimated an increase of 28 students. M. Emanuele stated she would like more information on enrollment before making any decisions on increasing staff. L. Pietrantonio stated he would not make any decision until the district has received the check. M. Malcolm asked when we think the check will come. Mr. Blackstone answered October. M. Malcolm asked how the staff increases would impact the current schedule. Dr. Bernard answered that these positions would be supplemental to current staff. M. Malcolm asked about creating additional sessions of classes. C. Trudon and M. Kortmann stated the additional sessions could be added in the spring for the high school.

M. Malcolm stated it pains him that we need to wait, especially for the Reading Specialist that is really needed at the high school. Dr. Bernard said that the state has told us over the phone that the money will be available. Mr. Blackstone confirmed that the numbers were released for planning purposes and the governor has signed off on the distribution methodology. J. Beausoleil asked if the town council needs to increase our appropriations to do this. Dr. Bernard and Mr. Blackstone answered no, it is sent directly.

C. Trudon asked how long the hiring process takes. Dr. Bernard estimates a month to six weeks. C. Trudon asked if the positions could be posted and if the money does not come don't complete the hire. M. Kortmann believes we should start the process. J. Beausoleil stated she does not want to start anything yet. She would like more time to review the options and gather more information. She is not ready to vote on the list. M. Emanuele agreed with J. Beausoleil.

J. Beausoleil stated she would like to see more money slated for the lower grades so remediation does not need to occur at the high school level. Dr. Bernard said that is a valid point. Dr. Bernard also stated that there are already reading specialists at all other grade levels. There are no reading specialists at the high school level. M. Malcolm stated he looked on line at the CMT and CAT scores. They indicate the need for assistance in reading at the high school level. M. Kortmann voiced a concern on waiting to begin hiring process because other schools will also be hiring. She believes the pool of qualified applicants may be reduced. She does not believe there are many technology support certified instructors especially.

M. Malcolm asked for clarification of the Technology Support position. Dr. Bernard said they would be integrating technology across the board at Robertson. At the middle school level there is an expectation of technology knowledge such as keyboarding and research using the internet.

M. Malcolm expressed a concern on hiring staff that will need to be laid off in the future if the funding is not sustained. He also mentioned that with the loss of the 1.2 million next year Coventry may need to lay off more staff. L. Pietrantonio agreed the loss of 1.2 million would mean more staff reductions. He added that adding positions not in a budget cycle will take longer. He does not know if the town will support this. He stated that spending the money now while not knowing what money will be received next year is a bad idea. M. Emanuele mentioned teacher salary negotiations are also coming up. Dr. Bernard mentioned that some school districts may be putting the money toward teacher increases and benefits. L. Pietrantonio, restated we should not spend the money this year, but use it next year.

J. Beausoleil mentioned some Special Education staff was cut last year. She said that if new special education needs come up, the money could be used to cover unexpected costs.

M. Malcolm asked if the A-G items under Option II were placed in order of priority of where to spend the money. Dr. Bernard answered no. M. Malcolm suggested adding the Reading Specialist at the high school and nothing else this year.

C. Trudon asked if Mr. Blackstone can determine what the state will do about the \$1.4 million differential. M. Kortmann and Dr. Bernard stated that no one will know until after elections.

M. Kortmann stated she would put in the three .5 FTE Para Educators and the School Improvement support staff.

C. Trudon asked about the group that made AYP. D. Petrone answered a sub group of Special Education were identified 5 years ago in reading and math. Two years later that group made safe harbor. The following year due to modifications in assessments, the sub groups were back on the list. Last year the sub group made safe harbor due to increases of 1.5 hours instructional time in reading and math. He noted the changes put in place last year to increase reading and math curriculum have helped. M. Emanuele asked if the programs put into place would still be there this year without adding the additional staff. T. Hopkins answered yes, but last year teachers had an additional adult in the room assisting that will not be there this year. J. Beausoleil asked if the additional paras were special or regular education. D. Petrone answered they would be assisting all students. L. Pietrantonio asked to confirm that the new positions would be the Reading Specialist and the Math Support. All other suggested positions are added hours or existing staff. The principals answered yes.

M. Moyer spoke about the need for more hours for the Psychologist at CGS. She stated the current Psychologist was working 3 days a week and that is not enough time to work with teachers and students.

L. Pietrantonio asked for the Boards pleasure. C. Trudon stated the Reading Specialist is important enough to not wait. She would like to find a way to keep this position even if the money runs out. J Beausoleil would support the reading specialist if it was for grades 6-12 instead of 8-12. She stated that if high school students are having trouble reading, the problem stems from a problem in the lower grades. M. Malcolm stated the test score suggest that we have the reading support in the lower grades. C. Trudon stated that the changes made for the lower grades were not experienced by students currently in high school. M. Malcolm suggested the administrators decide what grades the reading specialist is needed for.

M. Emanuele stated she does not want to make a decision on this now. She does not want to hire anyone at this point and wants more information before making a decision. C. Trudon asked what kind of information would be needed. M. Emanuele wants information on what the enrollment will be and how the CMT scores look, and how the efficiencies that have been put into place impact the testing scores. She is also concerned about the teacher contract coming up and having an impact on the budget. M. Malcolm asked the Board if he placed a motion to add the Reading Specialist would anyone support it. M. Kortmann and C. Trudon answered they would. M. Emanuele stated she would not.

L. Pietrantonio asked for a motion to add a vote to the agenda concerning the addition of a Reading Specialist.

**MOTION: To add to the agenda a vote with regards to the Education Jobs Fund Program in adding a Reading Specialist.**

**By: C. Trudon**

**Seconded: M. Kortmann**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously.**

**MOTION: To add 1.0 FTE Reading Specialist, post the position immediately, and leave it up to the Administrators to decide where that resource will be allocated**

**By: M. Malcolm**

**Seconded: M. Kortmann**

Discussion: M. Emanuele asked if this vote was for the Reading Specialist only or the other items under Option II. M. Malcolm answered it was for the Reading Specialist, and if the Board would like to add other resources they could do so at another time. C. Trudon asked if M. Malcolm would be amending his motion to include if the position is posted now or when the money arrives. M. Malcolm answered immediately. J. Beausoleil asked what happens if the money does not come. L. Pietrantonio answered just posting the position does not mean hiring is absolute.

**Result: Motion carries 5-1. M. Emanuele opposes.**

## **VI. REPORT OF CHAIRMAN**

L. Pietrantonio brought up an issue regarding the Coventry Youth Football League and their use of the high school football field to play 16 games. He said J. Barrett wanted to know if the Board would allow this. L. Pietrantonio said he called public works and the chairman of Coventry Youth Football League. After speaking with public works, it is his understanding the field will not sustain playing 16 games. Field maintenance has opposed the use of the field for this purpose.

L. Pietrantonio suggested that if there was a special playoff game, maybe the field could be used for that. He will continue to speak with public works and the football league. He does not think this is a Board issue.

C. Trudon said Board policy covers use of the facilities. M. Kortmann read the policy on use of the facility. L. Pietrantonio stated that the Board probably does not need to get involved; proper procedure channels should be followed.

L. Pietrantonio officially thanked the Superintendent for her work on the Opening Day events held for staff this morning.

## **VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

VOTE: Approve Minutes of August 12, 2010

**MOTION: To Approve the Minutes of the BOE Meeting of Thursday, August 12, 2010**

**By: M. Emanuele**

**Seconded: C. Trudon**

J. Beausoleil asked on page one, number IV, the phrase camera man be replaced by videographer. Also on page 3, the last sentence, change to ...he would like to add to the executive session...

M. Emanuele asked on page 4, under the motion to install the No Parking signs, add to the last paragraph "...who will work with the Traffic Authority."

M. Malcolm asked, on page 6, he believes he voted No on the motion to warn for a vote on 5144 Student Discipline policy. Dr. Bernard asked to have K. Michaud review the tape and make the correction if needed.

M. Emanuele asked that the last page that was stapled to the minutes be removed.

**Result: Motion to approve the minutes with noted changes passes unanimously.**

## **IX. OLD BUSINESS**

A. VOTE: Revision of Policy 3541 Transportation

**MOTION: To vote on revision of Policy 3541 Transportation**  
**By: M. Emanuele                      Seconded: J. Beausoleil**  
**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

B. VOTE: Revision of Policy 5132 Student Dress

**MOTION: To vote on revision of Policy 5132 Student Dress**  
**By: M. Emanuele                      Seconded: C. Trudon**

Discussion: M. Malcolm reiterated his original position that if the administrators can be left to judge whether or not the size of a belt buckle is too large to be considered a weapon, they should also be able to make judgment calls on other items students can and cannot wear such as ball caps. He stated the policy contradicts itself. He also stated he would compromise and vote yes.

**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

C. VOTE: Revision of Policy 5144 Student Dress

**MOTION: To vote on revision of Policy 5144 Student Discipline**  
**By: M. Emanuele                      Seconded: M. Kortmann**  
**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

D. VOTE: Revision of Policy 5145.1 Search and Seizure

**MOTION: To vote on revision of Policy 5145.1 Search and Seizure**  
**By: M. Emanuele                      Seconded: C. Trudon**  
**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

## **X. NEW BUSINESS**

VOTE: To approve Dr. Donna Bernard and Gregg Blackstone as the designated representatives authorized to sign claims for reimbursement for the Food Service Child Nutrition Program

**MOTION: To vote to approve Dr. Donna Bernard and Gregg Blackstone as the designated representatives authorized to sign claims for reimbursement for the Food Service Child Nutrition Program.**  
**By: J. Beausoleil                      Seconded: C. Trudon**

Discussion: J. Beausoleil mentioned that the agenda lists Dr. Bernard and Mr. Blackstone, but the insert lists only Mr. Blackstone. M. Kortmann read from the insert, at the end of the paragraph, that both representatives must be listed even if only one is new. Dr. Bernard stated the word from the State is

you have to do both names even if only one is changing. The group agreed that both names will be listed.

**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

## **XI. REPORT OF BOARD MEMBERS**

Information: Fiscal Committee Report of August 12 Meeting – M. Kortmann and G. Blackstone

VOTE: Approve Budget Transfers as Presented

M. Kortmann spoke about the list of transfers that the Fiscal Committee agreed to bring forth to the Board for their vote. These transfers are required to balance the 09-10 year budget so no accounts end up in the red. The notable overages are the Athletic field trips and Social Security and they need to be watched because no budget adjustments were made to this year's budget. Other overages that were adjusted in this years budget are Utilities, Legal and Audit, and Unemployment.

**MOTION: To approve the budget transfer request that was generated on 8/11/2010 of \$406,020.50 and as itemized in the attached draft budget transfer sheet.**

**By: C. Trudon**

**Seconded: M. Kortmann**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

Dr. Bernard asked whether the Fiscal meeting scheduled for September 16th can be moved to another time or date because of the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new scoreboard and bleachers tentatively slated for 6:45 p.m. that same evening. There is also a Board of Education meeting at 7:30 p.m. that evening. C. Trudon asked if the Board meeting could be moved as well. L. Pietrantonio said he didn't have a problem moving the Board meeting. Dr. Bernard suggested that Ms. Michaud be asked to send out e-mails to determine a new date for the Fiscal and Board meetings.

L. Pietrantonio stated he would not be putting Executive Sessions on agendas in the near future because the Board is only handling the Teacher negotiations at this time. He will add Executive Sessions once other contracts come up for discussion.

## **XII. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.**

**By: M. Emanuele**

**Seconded: M. Kortmann**

**Result: Motion passes.**

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Respectfully submitted:

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Terri Lessard  
Subcommittee Clerk

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Approved