

**Coventry Board of Education  
Coventry, CT  
Approved Minutes  
Special Fiscal Committee Meeting  
Monday, December 14, 2009**

Members Present: Mary Kortmann, Fiscal Committee Chair  
Cheryl Trudon, Fiscal Committee Member  
Mark Malcolm, Fiscal Committee Member

Also Present: Dr. Donna Bernard, Superintendent of Schools  
Sherry Holmes, Fiscal Services Director

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm by M. Kortmann.

**I. Discussion: Joint Town Finance/BOE Fiscal Meeting Preparation**

Dr. Bernard went over the agenda for the Town Meeting. She said there are ARRA-Special Education Excess Cost concerns for the Board of Education. She said there is a 23% reduction in Excess Cost funding. She said we do not have final numbers yet. Dr. Bernard said the amount could be as much as \$160,000. She said we will know more once we examine our January and February budget projections.

Mark Malcolm said we are already absorbing approximately \$70,000 in energy costs on a very lean budget. He said we will, at a minimum, attempt to absorb another \$95,000-\$165,000. He said the Principals at all the schools are at critical spending. He asked at what cost to the quality of education can we absorb \$160,000. He said it is not because we budgeted improperly, but because the State has levied this upon us.

Dr. Bernard said it is right to make sure the Town is informed of the Board of Education's situation. She said we have been inappropriately funded by the State. Cheri Trudon said it is an unexpected reduction in funding from the State. Mary Kortmann added that the change occurred in the October, 2009 budget, and later. She said the reduction in funding occurred long after the Board of Education's budget was finalized.

Dr. Bernard said there is no margin in the budget to absorb \$160,000. She said in the past, schools ran 6%, 7%, 9% and double digit budgets. Dr. Bernard said when special education budgets ("went upside down")(were under-funded), the system absorbed the cost for decades. She said when districts are running 0-1% budgets, there is no margin to absorb this amount.

Mark Malcolm said that since we are aware of this issue, it is important to resolve it now and to make the Town aware of it now.

Dr. Bernard spoke of the ARRA money and RTI mandated programs. She said we allocated \$185,000 to Special Education, \$7,000 to Preschool, and \$93,000 to Regular Education.

Mary Kortmann said we will have much firmer numbers in February, 2010.

Cheri Trudon said her goal, going into the Town meeting, is to have a “looking forward” role, instead of telling them what the Board of Education has already done. C. Trudon wants to move forward and ask the Town for guidance with this budget.

Mark Malcolm said the Board of Education needs help now addressing this issue of excess costs that is currently impacting the principals’ ability to operate. He said the quality of education is negatively impacted. He said we should start the conversation now.

Mary Kortmann said we can have as much as a \$160,000 problem. She said we will try to cover it internally. She said we will know more in February, 2010.

## **II. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Michelle M. Bates, BOE Clerk

**January 14, 2010**

Approved