

**COVENTRY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
APPROVED MINUTES  
SPECIAL MEETING OF TUESDAY MAY 20, 2008**

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

Members Absent: John Barrett

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

Also present were; Paul Noel, Director of Physical Plant and Facilities; Troy Hopkins, CHS Principal; Michele Mullaly, CNH Principal; David Petrone, GHR Principal; Raymond Grasso, CGS Principal; a few citizens; The Chronicle newspaper was represented. All motions are directed to the Coventry Board of Education.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

By: Chairman, L. Pietrantonio                      Time: 7:40 p.m.  
Place: Administration Building Conference Room

**II. SALUTE THE FLAG**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by L. Pietrantonio.

**III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS**

Jennifer Beausoleil of 221 Eastview Drive said she realizes the Board has very difficult decisions to make tonight regarding budget cuts. She asked that the Board be open minded and to keep staffed the programs that have the biggest return on investment. She said the intervention and early learning that occur at the Coventry Grammar School and the G. H. Robertson School are the places for the biggest return on investment.

**IX. OLD BUSINESS**

Discussion and VOTE: FY 2009 Budget

L. Pietrantonio stated the Board packets included budget items for review and there were additional items to be passed out for consideration. Ms. Holmes handed out a revised copy of item "C" FY 2008-2009 Budget, item "D" Detailed Breakdown of Categories, and a memo from PSSS regarding unfunded 08-09 tuition costs. Dr. Bernard added that the special education budget is something that evolves constantly, even after the budget has been "put to bed" early in the year.

L. Pietrantonio asked the Board if they had any suggestions or questions.

M. Kortmann asked about the figure on item D related to magnet school tuition. Dr. Bernard stated the district was already over budget in that area for 2008-09. Ms. Holmes added wherever something was added into the budget it had to be taken away somewhere else.

M. Whitham asked about the summer school transportation in the PSSS memo. Ms. Richard replied the district is required by the state to provide summer school to many special education students; it is mandated.

R. Williams said it looked to him like only personnel could be cut at this time and he wanted to know what staff that would include.

Dr. Bernard responded this was discussed at length by the Administrative Council and handed out a sheet entitled, "Budget Reductions." She said, when compiling the list, the Administrative Council asked what the minimal impact would be on the system.

K. Ryan asked if the .5 special education para-educator was from any one school. Ms. Richard responded not at this time and that the shifting of students with the new year needs to be considered before that decision is made. Dr. Bernard continued saying no staff had been noticed, including the union leads, so tonight's discussion could not be too deep with regards to actual positions.

C. Trudon confirmed that the Board could not ask what person, or grade the cut was coming from. Dr. Bernard agreed saying seniority lists needed to be reviewed with the union leads. She said the reduction list was developed so not one school would take the complete budget hit.

M. Kortmann asked about the new initiatives from the original Addition/Reduction Analysis Spreadsheet. Ms. Holmes said all of those items have been deleted or backed out of the original presented budget.

D. Bernard noted that an email was sent to staff asking for suggestions with regards to budget reductions and those suggestions were discussed with the Administrative Council when making the decisions. She reiterated the fact that specific staff or programs could not be discussed at the meeting tonight.

R. Williams stated his worry about the position of the CHS Athletic Trainer as it relates to district liability. L. Pietrantonio said hiring an Athletic Trainer was not an option at this juncture. Dr. Bernard said an EMT or a medical doctor is on site for each football game.

L. Pietrantonio noted the last thing the Board wants to touch is sports. He said the Board could either make these budget reductions in staff or go after sports, which would not even cover the \$212K.

M. Kortmann added she agrees the Athletic Trainer is needed, but the town did not support the first budget, so it is an item that cannot come back at this time.

L. Pietrantonio said when bodies are cut it is very difficult to get back those cut positions.

Dr. Bernard said some constituencies are upset with just the new initiatives being cut and if one would go down the list, there are people upset about each item being reduced.

C. Trudon asked for confirmation regarding the unfunded tuitions costs in special education and that those items were unknown when the budget was developed. Ms. Richard said yes, the special education budget for the next year develops constantly from December through the spring.

M. Whitham summarized the amounts the Board needed to account for, saying the money for special education costs combined with contractual increases is really what it comes down to. L. Pietrantonio said even if the budget passed the first time, the district would be in trouble due to these items. M. Whitham said if special education costs keep going up, districts will have to find ways to fund them. R. Williams asked if the group home issue was the main cause of the unforeseen special education cost. Ms. Richard responded, saying it is a bigger issue than in the past and it will continue.

