

**COVENTRY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
APPROVED MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING OF THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2007**

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

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Kelley Smart, Student BOE Representative

Administrators Present: Dr. Donna Bernard, Superintendent  
Sherry Holmes, Fiscal Services Director

Also present were Troy Hopkins, CHS Principal; Matt Hurlock, CHS Girls Volleyball Coach; Girls Volleyball Players; a few Contemporary Issues students; and 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: 7:32 p.m.  
Place: Administration Building Conference Room

**II. SALUTE THE FLAG**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by L. Pietrantonio.

L. Pietrantonio asked if the Board had any items they wanted added to the agenda. There were none.

**III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS**

There were none.

**IV. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

A. Student Recognition: CHS Girls Volleyball Team – State Championship  
Dr. Bernard congratulated Mr. Hurlock and the volleyball team for winning the state championship. She asked Mr. Hurlock if he had any comments. Mr. Hurlock said that he had a great time coaching this year. He said the team worked very hard and had two great captains to lead them. He added that they played their best for the most important game, which says a lot for the type of players they are.

Mr. Hurlock introduced the two team captains Jenna Lebowitz and Ashley Curtis. Both captains commented that they had a great season and thanked their teammates. Dr. Bernard asked the rest of the team to come forward by grade. Dr. Bernard said when speaking to people she uses the volleyball team as an example of Coventry excellence.

The Board presented each team member with a rose and the entire team with a certificate worth \$200 to go towards their “team night.”

L. Pietrantonio commented that 92 and 2 is one great record for a team. He said that every one of the players should be very proud of what they've accomplished. He added that it really is an unbelievable record and you won't find it anywhere else for a long time. He said that these girls are great athletes and great students and that the Board is very, very proud.

Dr. Bernard commended the parents who are there for their children and for continuously supporting them in all they do. Dr. Bernard added congratulations to Mr. Hopkins for his leadership and supervision of the high school.

B. Information and VOTE: Magnet School Partnerships – “Authorize the Superintendent to Enter into Magnet School Agreements within Budget Capacity.”

Dr. Bernard explained how the action taken by state legislators last spring has the educational “world” spinning. She brought to the Board's attention the list of magnet schools within the “commutable” area. She said the definition of a “participating” district is the most interesting and confusing at the same time. She added the magnet school situation is impermanent and is a moving target. She noted this will affect Coventry's Education Cost Sharing grant monies. She said in accordance with the new legislation the state has announced there will be a ¼ reduction to the resident student count for each resident student enrolled in a full-time magnet school program. She said this is in addition to districts being required to pay the tuition if a student wants to go to a magnet school and this is very different than how things started with magnet schools.

She said there is a need to get the financial “number” more stable. She said she is worried about students deciding they want to go to magnet schools in the middle of the fiscal year, for whatever reason, and then the district has to find the funds to pay. She added that the district validates there are multiple ways for a student to receive their high school education and that she is in favor of choices. She said she wants the Board to know that this is a very murky situation and it will be addressed by state legislators again for further defining.

Dr. Bernard continued since we are now at the beginning of the budget development, the district needs to get a handle on what the magnet school costs will be for FY09. She said she believes the way to do this is by entering into agreement with a select number of these magnet schools.

K. Ryan asked if there was any talk of this at the CABE/CAPSS Convention. Dr. Bernard stated she has been to quite a few meetings this fall and everyone is talking about it

C. Trudon asked if the district enters into an agreement, is the payment due “up front”? Dr. Bernard said no, only if a student attends and that this will just set the number for budgeting purposes. A discussion ensued about what constitutes a participating district.

J. Barrett reiterated if the Board gives the Superintendent authorization to enter into agreements, the district does not have to pay until we send someone. Dr. Bernard concurred.

Dr. Bernard stated this authorization will allow more choice for Coventry students than ever before. A discussion ensued about school choice and fiscal responsibility.

L. Pietrantonio stated the Board should look at this from the Superintendent's point of view. He agreed that the state needs to put guidelines and timelines into place, especially

when it comes to parents letting districts know what they want. He added that districts can't have students deciding to go to magnet schools in the middle of the fiscal year.

M. Whitham asked for clarification. He wanted to know, if there were no "district" spots left in a particular magnet school, and a student still wanted to attend, could the parents pay the tuition. Dr. Bernard replied yes

M. Kortmann wanted to know what dollar figure the Superintendent was looking for for magnet schools. Dr. Bernard replied she didn't have an exact figure yet, but it would be presented in the budget as a line item for the Board to approve

L. Pietrantonio said the Board has a responsibility to look at these programs and get information about them before recommendations are made to parents.

A discussion ensued about credentials of these magnet school programs and related tuition. R. Williams stated if the magnet school tuition for students is only \$2,000 each, why not send all of the students to magnet schools?

K. Ryan said it is very important to plan how this is going to impact our budget and the taxpayer. She added the Board needs to affectively plan financially. She said this is the Board's responsibility.

J. Barrett clarified that the Superintendent was asking to enter into agreements, within budget capacity, but was not asking the Board to be bound to a specific amount at this time. Dr. Bernard agreed and said again dollar figures would be brought to the Board in the budget presentation in January.

**MOTION: Authorize the Superintendent to Enter into Magnet School Agreements within Budget Capacity.**

**By: J. Barrett**

**Seconded: C. Trudon**

Discussion: C. Trudon asked if there were unused slots would the district have flexibility to move the tuition money from school to school as needed. Dr. Bernard said yes. M. Whitham asked if Dr. Bernard would come back with a list of preferred magnet schools. Dr. Bernard said she couldn't validate good or bad, but would come with a list of who she has entered into agreements with. Discussion continued about different types of magnet schools and how they fill up. J. Barrett asked the superintendent to add flexibility when making these agreements. He said he would like the district to be able to add students as the budget allows, so there isn't a block to choice.

**Result: Motion passes unanimously.**

**V. CONSENT AGENDA**

There was none.

**VI. REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN**

L. Pietrantonio had nothing to report at this time.

**VII. COMMUNICATIONS**

There were none.

## VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

VOTE: Approve Minutes of November 8, 2007

C. Trudon asked for the following changes:

Page 2, first sentence the last word should read “recently.”

Page 2, first paragraph under Report of the Superintendent, third sentence should read, “She noted the article “10 Mistakes Board Members Make” and that this document is timely for new board members.”

Page 2, second paragraph under Report of the Superintendent, the beginning of last sentence should read, “She noted under the district enrollment portion she had heard concerns about ...”

M. Whitham asked that changes be made to page 5 under the result of the motion to approve the teachers’ agreement. He stated that he and J. Barrett did not vote against the agreement but abstained from the vote. This abstention was a result of them being new members to the Board and as such had not been available for previous Executive Sessions. A qualified decision could not be made given the limited time to review documents.

**MOTION: To Approve the Minutes of November 8, 2007 with noted changes.**

**By: J. Barrett**

**Seconded: K. Ryan**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously.**

## IX. OLD BUSINESS

Information: Committee Assignments – L. Pietrantonio

L. Pietrantonio said no one had come forward with committee assignment preferences.

L. Pietrantonio made the following assignments:

**Grievance:** The whole Board would serve as needed for any grievances, or an ad-hoc committee would be assigned.

**Expulsion:** J. Barrett, C. Trudon, and L. Pietrantonio as Chair

**Fiscal:** M. Kortmann, R. Williams, and C. Trudon as Chair. R. Williams asked not to be on this committee. L. Pietrantonio said he would consider another member.

**Policy:** M. Kortmann, M. Whitham, and K. Ryan as Chair

**Transportation:** J. Barrett, K. Ryan, and C. Trudon as Chair

**EASTCONN Representative:** K. Ryan

L. Pietrantonio stated he will possibly assign a designee to be the Great Path Academy Representative.

L. Pietrantonio said other committee assignments could be made on an “as needed” basis.

M. Whitham stated he would be interested in serving on any technology committee. L. Pietrantonio said he will possibly bring to the Board in the near future the proposal of a Curriculum Committee, which would include technology.

L. Pietrantonio reminded members if they would like to see something on an agenda, to please contact him or Kimberlee. He added that he wants to make sure everyone has a chance to be heard.

## NEW BUSINESS

A. VOTE: Approve CHS Field Experience to New York City, NY

**MOTION: To Approve the CHS Field Experience to the Guggenheim, The Met, and Chinatown in New York City, NY on December 7.**

**By: K. Ryan**

**Seconded: M. Whitham**

J. Barrett added this is a wonderful opportunity for the students and encouraged approval.

**Result: Motion passes unanimously.**

B. Information and VOTE: Capital Improvement Plan – S. Holmes

L. Pietrantonio said any item over \$100,000 is subject to a town referendum. He said this Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a summary of what the district needs up to six years out.

Ms. Holmes talked to the CIP spreadsheet included in the Board packets. She handed out the list of descriptions associated with each item. She said that the CIP approval is a yearly routine. Dr. Bernard stated that item number 1 “classroom computerization/upgrade” is the most important one and it is very important to our infrastructure.

Ms. Holmes went through the remaining items and explained them one by one.

C. Trudon asked about the bleachers and if the Town Council addressed this item. L. Pietrantonio said the town has applied for a STEEP grant, but it hasn’t been approved yet so we still need to plan for it if the grant doesn’t come through.

C. Trudon asked about the digital controls for the boilers and are they transferable if we need to get new boilers. L. Pietrantonio said yes.

M. Whitham asked what exactly does \$705,000 include for item one. Mrs. Holmes replied that it is for different items each year and that plans will be developed year by year.

K. Ryan added that the Board needs to make reasonable recommendations for the Town Council to act on.

J. Barrett asked if the STEEP grant is a good possibility, why couldn’t the Board put off the bleachers in case the grant comes through.

A discussion ensued about various items on the CIP list.

J. Barrett asked about the monies set aside for the cafeteria equipment. He said it seems that these items should be replaced sooner than bleachers should be put in. He asked if the Board could move the cafeteria equipment up. Mrs. Holmes replied yes.

A discussion ensued about funding cafeteria equipment from different avenues, what in the CIP is considered routine maintenance and what could be in the BOE budget as line items.

L. Pietrantonio said the Board can adjust this list as they see fit.

The consensus of the Board was to move item #26 “Outdoor Bleachers – CHS” to FY2009 and item #3 “Cafeteria Equipment Needs to all Schools” to FY2011 and to make a footnote that if the Town receives the STEEP grant we will not need the money for bleachers.

**MOTION: To Approve the Capital Improvement Plan as amended.**

**By: K. Ryan**

**Seconded: C. Trudon**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously.**

**X. REPORT OF BOARD MEMBERS**

School Building Committee Report – L. Pietrantonio

L. Pietrantonio stated the SBC is in a holding pattern. He said he would report any updates as soon as they happen.

M. Kortmann said she attended the CAFE/CAPSS convention and learned about many different topics.

M. Kortmann asked if Coventry High School could take a survey of the graduates when they reach college to see if they had to take any remedial courses at their college. K. Ryan asked if the following be added to that question: At what time in their school career did they decide to go to college? Dr. Bernard said she would work with CHS guidance to see what she could come up with.

M. Whitham wanted the Board to know that computers and technology is what he does for business. He added he would really like to serve on any committees that involve this topic because he could bring a lot of value to a committee with that focus. L. Pietrantonio thanked him for the offer and said he would definitely keep him in mind.

**XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session for discussion related to the negotiations for the Cafeteria Workers' Agreement and Nurses' Agreement.

**MOTION: Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session for discussion related to the negotiations for the Cafeteria Workers' Agreement and Nurses' Agreement at 9:55 p.m. with the Superintendent and Fiscal Services Director present.**

**By: K. Ryan**

**Seconded: C. Trudon**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously.**

**XII. OPEN SESSION**

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION: To adjourn the Board meeting at 10:29 p.m.**

**By: K. Ryan**

**Seconded: M. Kortmann**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously.**

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Respectfully submitted,

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Kimberlee Michaud  
Board Clerk

December 18, 2007  
Approved