

Coventry Board of Education
Approved Minutes
Special Meeting of Thursday, December 3, 2009

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

Also Present: Robert Joyce, Student BOE Representative

Administrators Present: Donna Bernard, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
 Sherry Holmes, Fiscal Services Director

Also present were: Paul Noel, Director of Physical Plant and Facilities and a few citizens.

I. CALL TO ORDER

By: Larry Pietrantonio at 7:30 pm
Place: Town Hall Annex

II. SALUTE THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Larry Pietrantonio.

III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

None.

IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

Information: Review of CABE/CAPSS Convention

Dr. Donna Bernard addressed the Chairman regarding the CABE/CAPSS Convention. Dr. Bernard referred to the PowerPoint presentation, saying the workshop was well attended, and received positive feedback. Dr. Bernard thanked all who attended. She attended sessions on negotiations as well as other workshops.

Jennifer Beausoleil attended the CABE/CAPSS Convention. She said many of the sessions focused on the economic climate and adjusting to this economy. She attended a Legislative seminar.

Cheryl Trudon also attended the Legislative seminar, and a seminar on using technology to help cut costs. She mentioned an idea where a high school principal keeps a camera in his pocket all the time. The principal takes pictures throughout the day and shows them on a screen. C. Trudon said that many students will watch a screen to see their faces on it, and meanwhile a flashing message may say “Study for your SAT’s tomorrow” or “Study for your midterms.”

Mary Kortmann attended the session on negotiations. She hopes we will use some of the ideas.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

A. Information: Committee Assignments - Larry Pietrantonio

- 1. Expulsion Committee:** John Barrett, Mary Kortmann and Larry Pietrantonio
- 2. Fiscal Committee:** Mary Kortmann, Mark Malcolm and Cheryl Trudon
- 3. Custodians Negotiations Committee:** John Barrett, Larry Pietrantonio and Mary Kortmann
- 4. Policy Committee:** Jennifer Beausoleil, Mary Ann Emanuele and Cheryl Trudon
- 5. Transportation Committee:** Cheryl Trudon , John Barrett and Jennifer Beausoleil
- 6. Technology Liaison:** Jennifer Beausoleil
- 7. Curriculum Liaison:** Cheryl Trudon
- 8. E.O. Smith Representative:** John Barrett
- 9. Teacher Negotiations Committee:** all seven BOE members. L. Pietrantonio said teacher negotiations are coming up this summer. He said there is a set timetable that needs to be followed. He said that when strategies are discussed in Executive Session, all Board members will know what is going on. He said, during actual teacher negotiations when in Executive Session, it will consist of the seven Board members; the clerk and Dr. Bernard would not be included. He will have Dr. Bernard find out who the town’s representative is. He said there will be some hard choices coming up in the next budget year.
- 10. Channel 17 Committee:** John Barrett asked Larry Pietrantonio if he put any thought into his suggestion of adding an additional committee regarding channel 17. L. Pietrantonio said he doesn’t know very much about channel 17. Dr. Bernard said John Elsesser, Town Manager, has a grant in process. Dr. Bernard said it might be better to wait until the spring to see if we get the grant and to know the direction we will take. L. Pietrantonio asked J. Barrett to take “the ball” on channel 17. C. Trudon asked if it was muni-vision. J. Barrett said channel 13 is muni-vision and channel 17 is our version of muni-vision and that we are responsible for the programming at this point. He said we are not doing it. J. Barrett said the Board is the driving force behind the school district. He said if no one is left in charge, then we are left in charge. J. Barrett said there is some serious lack of organization because the staff is lacking. His idea is to get one member from each one of the schools, and to get some coordination going about what is being recorded. His understanding is that there is a serious lack of knowledge on what has been recorded and what can be up in lag time, especially with our board meetings. Cheryl Trudon said they are running all the time. Dr. Bernard said maybe a place to start is an information presentation to the board as to what is channel 17, and what a coordinated effort is. Dr. Bernard said it is a little challenging

staff-wise. John Barrett said his personal opinion is that he thinks that the schools may want to know the direction the board wants to take it versus the board being told what direction the district wants to take. John Barrett said he would love to volunteer to be on the committee. Larry Pietrantonio again asked J. Barrett to take “the ball” on channel 17, and see whether we can do a presentation. John Barrett asked that there be some coordination with channel 17, so that the board’s desires are reflected back to the staff to get use out of this asset that we are not using to its full potential. Dr. Bernard said she is delighted to get Board support in all ways for public relations efforts. Dr. Bernard said that when we get to our budget numbers, she hopes the board is all there because she will be cutting 15 more bodies. L. Pietrantonio said the ad hoc committee of 1 (for Channel 17) is John Barrett.

B. Discussion: Roof Project; RFQ Reviews – L. Pietrantonio

Larry Pietrantonio started with his three choices being: Silver, Jacunski and Lawrence. He said their projects are within our scope. He doesn’t see any state reimbursement money coming to this project. He says the only thing that will get us any federal or state monies is if we do photo cells or some sort of energy conservation. He said the three he chose hit hard on photo. He doesn’t know what the taxpayer is going to want to pick up, Mark Malcolm said he thinks the taxpayer will want the most cost effective solution. M. Malcolm said reimbursement money is nice, but if the project cost is \$10 million and we are reimbursed \$7 million, we would still have to pay out \$3 million instead of the \$1.5 million. L. Pietrantonio said as long as we go with the study, going with photo, and handling any structural problems, the three companies will get the job done. Larry Pietrantonio said his gut reaction is that Rick Lawrence, is the best guy for the job in this area. L. Pietrantonio said he has to recuse himself of 50% of the people in the pile because he has done work for them. He said that Rick Lawrence has done a lot of roofs in a lot of schools and he is at the right size for the project and he is focused on it. L. Pietrantonio’s concern is that for the larger firms they are here because the economy is bad. He said if they get one big school project, we would not see them, we would see an engineer, not the principal or higher person.

Mark Malcolm agreed with Larry Pietrantonio. He said Lawrence is right in our backyard, being in Manchester. He said Lawrence is at the top of his list. He said Lawrence did CGS’s roof in 1990, and there have not been any extensive problems for 20 years. He said their qualifications are great. He said he also liked Hibbard. He said they had a lot of local references. They had done roofs for Suffield and many other schools. M. Malcolm also listed Silver as one of his choices.

Larry Pietrantonio referred to the estimated and actual costs. He said he doesn’t want to go any more than 4. He said three would be the best. He said the next step is to send out letters to get pricing saying here is the final selection, give us a cost estimate, to complete the two roofs in question (CNH and Robertson) and a bid alternate of a study at the Grammar School.

John Barrett said he came up with Hibbard and came up with five. He said all the guys are qualified. He said Hibbard and the three that Larry Pietrantonio chose are his choices. He said he looked at the alternative styles and changes in roof configurations to adapt to going from flat roof to a pitched roof. He thought it was interesting that some of the quotes made such a drastic recommendation to get rid of the flat roof scenario. L. Pietrantonio said you cannot get rid of the flat roofs in the schools because it doesn't work. L. Pietrantonio said we have to be careful that in some of these older buildings you have roof drains that are running through masonry walls in the schools that become inaccessible. He said you'd have to saw and cut the cinder blocks to get at them. He said there was a problem with the old gym at the high school, where saw cutting was done because there was a crack in the pipe that was leaking from a roof drain. He said when we look at designs further down the road, we will look for more pitch to the outside where the drains are running exterior to the building. He said if there is a problem, it would be fixed easily. L. Pietrantonio suggested bringing the 4 roofers to a meeting, getting their prices on exactly what they will provide and make a selection. He asked what will happen if the cost analysis is over the amount of money we have to pay for it. He thinks the Grammar School must go as an alternate.

Cheri Trudon ranked all of her choices as "1." Her choices were: Jacunski, Silver and Lawrence. She said she is skeptical on the aid we would get from the State. She hoped there would be federal money involved. She hoped to tap into some of the "greener" applications and to offset the cost to the taxpayers. She doesn't know if we have "green looking" roofs or the environment for a "green" roof. She said if we do, and if we have enough sun maybe we could get some federal money. She said each of the three RFQ's she chose all had some "green" experience and were certified to get the "green" money.

Mary Kortmann had the same three. She especially liked Lawrence. She mentioned that written in red, Lawrence said your project will not become bogged down due to lack of knowledge of regulatory regulations with a school construction project. She said her problem with Hibbard is that they did not outline their scope of services; they listed projects. She said Hibbard did not tell us what they would do in any of the phases. She said that almost all the roofs say pre-applied modified build up system and M. Kortmann was afraid they already had the answer no matter what the question was.

Jennifer Beausoleil said if we use out of state vendors, they will use sub-contractors that will require an increase in the prices. Cheri Trudon said we all live in Connecticut; that this is a municipal project; that she'd feel good if we gave the job to those in Connecticut.

L. Pietrantonio said the engineer becomes critical at handling a job of this scope. He expressed concern over proper supervision on the job site.

Mary Ann Emanuele liked Lawrence. She also liked Hoffman and Kaestle Boos. She was concerned with Silver because with one of their groups, who she had contact with, had major problems, making major mistakes. She was involved with them involving engineering that had been done. She said there were major mistakes made. She said

supervision that they were there to do, was not done. She does not want us to be involved with Silver, because of one of the groups within Silver's company.

Larry Pietrantonio mentioned that Kaestle Boos, made huge addition errors as the lead engineer for the original school building project in Coventry. He said the errors were \$400,000-\$1,000,000. He said if the paperwork is sloppy, there will be nothing but problems, especially when the state or feds come in.

There was discussion about whether Silver still uses the group that Mary Ann Emanuele mentioned (M. Malcolm); and whether they could be interviewed (C. Trudon).

Cheri Trudon summarized that Lawrence, Jacunski and Hibbard were the most popular choices among the Board members. John Barrett said his fifth choice was BL Companies. He analyzed small, medium and large companies, ending up with 5 companies.

Larry Pietrantonio said we should write the letters and give them a standard 2-3 weeks, asking for the price, and a reply a week before Christmas. He said we should shoot for the January meeting to talk about pricing.

The three finalists chosen were: The Lawrence Associates; Jacunski Humes Architects, LLC.; and Hibbard & Rosa Architects, LLC.

VI. REPORT OF BOARD MEMBERS

A. Fiscal Committee-Mary Kortmann

Mary Kortmann said the October numbers were analyzed. She said we had a couple sets of numbers that we are interested in refining, like unemployment. She said we are hoping to find out who is still collecting. She said if the rate at which people are collecting is the same as the beginning of the year, then the BOE has a problem. She referred to the Excess Cost Calculations. She said the committee spent a lot of time discussing how the State will not reimburse the Coventry BOE for all of its excess costs, and how we will have to absorb an additional 23% of costs. M. Kortmann said the State thinks we should get the money out of the ARRA money, which the Board already had plans for. She said Transfers were discussed. She said Transfers will come to the next Board meeting. She said the way the Transfer from was laid out, the transfers that were from the budget vs. what actually needed to be transferred, needed to be separated. She said the 2010 Fiscal meeting schedule will be changed to right before the first Board meeting of the month, with the review with the full Board happening at the last meeting of the month.

John Barrett asked whether the deficit of 23% reduction in excess costs is now real.

Sherry Holmes said that all the information we have received indicate a 23% reduction in excess cost reimbursement. She said the State does not have the numbers up on their website

yet. She said we have a total amount of what the excess cost grant is, and a total amount of what they will cut. Dr. Bernard said we budget 90% of what we get in excess costs. There was a discussion whether Coventry would be hit with a 23% or a 13% loss in revenue from the state based on the 90 % budgeted excess cost amount. John Barrett said if we take \$1,136,259 (Anticipated) minus \$261,000 (23%) = roughly \$900,000. \$1,081,036 (Appropriation) - \$900,000=\$180,000 roughly. He said the net hit will not be approximately \$270,000, but \$180,000 instead.

Sherry Holmes brought up the scenario where districts like Bridgeport and Hartford, who put in more than their fair share, get paid a lot more. She said when they come around to Coventry, there isn't necessarily 77%, so you might end up with a bigger hit than the 23%. She said she's been in that situation before.

John Barrett said it bothers him that we are talking about the loss of revenue. He said we have been appropriated a budget by the Town Council for \$23.6 million. He said regardless of this money, the Town Council is still responsible to give us \$23.6 million. M. Kortmann said, the ECS comes directly to the district. J. Barrett said that is anticipated as a negative, already in the budget. M. Kortmann agreed, saying the \$1,081,036 figure is a negative in the budget. J. Barrett said regardless of this, the Board has been appropriated by the Town Council, \$23.6 million. He continued and said we have showed them what our anticipated revenue in this area would be. He said if we are short on that, are they still responsible for giving us a \$23.6 million. He said the Town of Coventry has authorized us to spend this money. He said it has always been a problem with him that we add the excess grant cost money into our budget and take it as a negative. He said in reality we are spending \$24.7 million instead of the \$23.6 million. He said we are just offsetting it in our budgeting package. He said we have a budget that has been authorized and he does not know if we really have to worry about the other. He said we should be talking to the Town Council about making sure we get our money from them.

Larry Pietrantonio said the Town must know the shortfall. Dr. Bernard said there is a joint Fiscal meeting on December 14, 2009. Mary Kortmann said, out of the town budget, the State will take 3% from them as well. M. Kortmann said we will all be sharing the responsibility. Cheri Trudon mentioned possibly spending less in the unemployment category or changes in personnel.

Jennifer Beausoleil said we have to be prepared if the legal answer from the town is that it is the BOE's problem, not the town's.

John Barrett asked, without laying off a bunch of people, how the BOE will come up with the money. Dr. Bernard said that by January, we will know a lot more.

Mary Ann Emanuele mentioned that in the 1970's savings in heat and electricity were realized when the buildings were not being used, such as during vacations. Dr. Bernard said we are pricing out a mechanism which shuts down all the computers; 800 units; which will be a 60% savings in costs. She said we are working on rebates with CL&P, and that we are looking at energy savings. Dr. Bernard said the big gain is the people.

Mark Malcolm said he agrees with the last statement 100% that the big gain is people. He said he has two concerns. He said when he hears 60 % energy savings, he thinks it is 60% of the energy you'll be saving using your on your computer alone, which equates to pennies. He noted the hard decisions that the Board is going to make and the cuts that may have to be made in the spring. He said he is concerned about making cuts in the spring as it would only be saving a quarter of the fiscal year. Dr. Bernard said the decisions for those cuts, if needed, would be made earlier than the spring; they would be made in January.

John Barrett questioned the LEA Cap. He said the new number for the DCF Placement Cap is \$11,641. He said we budgeted \$11,522. He also asked why the transfers were not done tonight. Mary Kortmann said we are re-doing the transfer sheet. She said we are separating reality to budget. M. Kortmann said we are over budget in some areas. She said we have a whole year's bills; we are short; we will fix with a transfer. John Barrett said if we are projecting a shortfall, we need to do a transfer, which is taken right out of our policy. J. Barrett asked where we are showing a deficit. Sherry Holmes said 1) Pension 2) workmen's comp 3) Property and Liability. J. Barrett asked if there were any surprises on health insurance. Sherry Holmes said there is a meeting scheduled for December 10.

Larry Pietrantonio said the BOE did get the grant for the bleachers. L. Pietrantonio spoke to John Elsesser who said the only cost obligation is a \$240 sign saying who paid for them. He said the town will pay the \$240. L. Pietrantonio questioned whether there would be additional site work costs such as concrete work. John Barrett asked for copies of the grant. L. Pietrantonio said the bleachers run about \$240,000.

John Barrett said he thinks it is great that the Fiscal Committee has adjusted its schedule so the Board will be able to review the Fiscal minutes before the discussion happens with the full Board. He thanked the Fiscal Committee.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn the Coventry Board of Education Special Meeting of Thursday, December 3, 2009 at 8:45 pm

By: Larry Pietrantonio Seconded: Cheri Trudon
Motion Passes.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle M. Bates, BOE Subcommittee Clerk

January 14, 2010
Approved