

Coventry Board of Education
Coventry, Connecticut

Special Board of Education Meeting
Approved Minutes of February 16, 2017
Administration Building Conference Room

Attendance Taken at 7:30 p.m.

Board Members Present:

William Oros, Chairman
Jennifer Beausoleil, Vice Chair (arrived 7:34 p.m.)
Michael Sobol, Secretary
Frank Infante
Mary Kortmann
Eugene Marchand
Mary Minor

Administrators Present:

David J. Petrone, Superintendent of Schools
Robert Carroll, Director of Finance and Operations

I. Call to Order

W. Oros called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

II. Salute to the Flag

W. Oros led the salute to the flag.

III. Audience of Citizens

There were none.

IV. Report of Board Members

IV.A. Information: Fiscal Committee Report - Special Meeting of February 16, 2017

V. Old Business

V.A. VOTE: Discussion and possible VOTE: FY2018 Budget

W. Oros asked M. Sobol to review the most recently discussed item of the Fiscal Committee.

M. Sobol started with the last topic discussed by the Fiscal Committee which was the local impact of the state budget challenges. The Board talked about the school district's challenge of presenting a budget to the Town in these uncertain times. M. Sobol noted that he prefers presenting a budget on known facts.

7:34 p.m. - J. Beausoleil arrived

The Board talked about the State's budget issues and what Coventry's shortfall will be and how that specifically relates to the school district.

M. Kortmann explained excess cost and the ECS grant and how those funds are accounted for in the proposed FY18 budget. She said you cannot see these income streams in the charter format of the budget, which is why she would like to see it as a separate line. Mr. Carroll reviewed documents from the State and noted how things have changed since the Board last met.

J. Beausoleil said she believes we have to develop our budget based on what we know and what we know is what the Governor is presenting. She said, if these items come to fruition, and we haven't accounted for the excess cost and teacher retirement issues, we could be upside down by close to \$1,300,000.

The Board discussed the excess cost issue and the possible teacher retirement costs being put on the towns. J. Beausoleil said the teacher retirement should be added as a separate line item to the BOE budget.

The Board discussed the options of how this could be presented to the town in general. E. Marchand noted so much of this is speculative, we just don't know what is going to happen. He said he would be very leery of a high percentage increase based on these items.

M. Minor said she would be concerned with ignoring it altogether, she believes there should be a placeholder somewhere. J. Beausoleil agreed saying, out of fairness to the taxpayer, it has to be somewhere.

Mr. Carroll reviewed what the increase would be to the budget with adjusting excess cost and also adding in teachers' retirement. The Board talked about how to move forward with that information. E. Marchand said this will be difficult for the townspeople to understand.

M. Sobol talked about having a conversation with the Council on how to approach it properly.

M. Kortmann talked about the town side of the issues and how the state items effect mostly the town revenues, not so much of spending.

Board members discussed scenarios of either including these costs or not.

J. Beausoleil noted that, unfortunately, the state is putting their budget problems on the backs of the towns. She added that she would like to present a budget that includes items we believe need to be funded and not base it on a percentage.

M. Kortmann said it should all be included, but the budget presentation should spike out the numbers so it is easily understandable.

The Board suggested that Mr. Carroll work with Ms. Bauer to see if the details can be worked out as far as on which side of the budget the items should be placed.

E. Marchand asked if the Town Chair and the Board Chair could send a joint letter to the State Representatives to specifically address the concerns of the town.

All agreed the "normal" budget should be discussed and there should be a consensus on that before a final decision is made on these other two items.

The Board decided to discuss the normal budget, which currently has a bottom line 1.87% increase.

J. Beausoleil brought up the Raz-Kids reading program at CGS, noting that currently the CGS PTO funds this item. She said originally, she was going to recommend it be included in the budget, but added, with the current financial climate she most likely will not.

Mr. Petrone said there are many items like this that are funded district-wide.

M. Minor said the PTOs like funding items like this, it is meaningful.

M. Sobol said curricular items should not be paid for by the PTO. J. Beausoleil agreed saying these groups usually pay for one time things, however she does not believe we are in times when we should include this in the budget.

Board members talked about the expense and use of the OpenGov program. Mr. Carroll reviewed the usage of the town's OpenGov account by the public.

M. Sobol said, the Board should not fund the OpenGov expense for 17-18 and that he would rather see these funds go to the Raz-Kids program.

J. Beausoleil said each item should get consensus individually. There was consensus that OpenGov would not be funded and should be eliminated from the FY18 budget.

W. Oros asked what the feeling of the Board was on Raz-Kids. M. Minor agreed with the idea of paying for a curricular item like this, but believes it should go through the process of having the item presented by the administration and included in the budget originally, through that usual process. She added, agreeing with Mr. Petrone's point that these types of items are district-wide and we cannot put value on what one PTO is funding over another PTO.

While Mr. Sobol disagreed, the overall consensus was not to add in the RAZ kids.

M. Kortmann went through the budget assumptions.

M. Kortmann asked about the insurance. Mr. Petrone and Mr. Carroll said it is possible there could be a slight decrease in the costs. Mr. Carroll said we don't have the final figure yet - the further away from July 1 the more volatile it is. He said as we get closer to July 1, the firmer the number will get.

M. Kortmann asked about workers compensation line. Mr. Carroll said it is flat but it is based on the increase and it is a good figure.

M. Kortmann asked about the gas and diesel figure. Mr. Carroll said that is not set yet.

M. Kortmann asked about the special education outplacements. Mr. Petrone said it is what it is right now.

They continued and talked about the natural gas conversion.

The Board had consensus that the only changes to currently presented budget is the elimination of both the OpenGov fund of \$2,050 and \$305 from the pension.

VI. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 8:52 p.m.

By: E. Marchand

Seconded: M. Minor

Result: Motion passes unanimously

Respectfully submitted:

Kimberlee Arey Delorme
Board Clerk

Approved: February 23, 2017