

Coventry Board of Education
Coventry, Connecticut

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Approved Minutes of Thursday, February 9, 2023
Administration Building Conference Room

Members Present:

Jennifer Beausoleil, Chairperson
Gene Marchand, Vice Chairperson
Mary Kortmann, Secretary
Peter DePaola
Emma Eaton
Courtney Rossignol
Christina Williams

Administrators present:

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

Also present: Maya Waterhouse, Student Board of Education Representative

Audience: CNH Guidance Counselors Megan Legassey and Audrey Smith; CHS Guidance Counselors Jamie Johnston and Korrie Fetta; Beth Giller, PSSS Director; Cathie Drury, Director of Educational Technology; Joseph Blake, CHS Principal; Ross Sward, CNH Principal; Jennifer DeRagon, GHR Principal; Ronda Carrie, CGS Principal; William Trudelle, Director of Physical Plant and Facilities; Michele Mullaly, Director of Teaching and Learning; a few citizens; and one observer.

I. Call to Order

J. Beausoleil called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

II. Salute to the Flag

J. Beausoleil led the salute to the flag.

III. Audience of Citizens

Beth Weber, 14 Mockingbird Lane, was present to speak about the basketball program. She said there are 20 8th grade boy basketball players who may not be able to play in their freshman year, because there is not a program for all of them. She advocated for funds for a freshmen team.

Dave Pezzino, 49 Zeya Drive, was present to speak on behalf of a freshmen boys basketball team. He talked about the history of the program in town and advocated for the opportunity to be given to these students.

J. Beausoleil tabled the remainder of Audience of Citizens.

Audience of Citizens was resumed at 7:48 p.m.

Bob Sass, 268 Long Hill Road, was present to speak about bullying. He expressed his concern for procedures not being followed regarding allegations of bullying. He went on further to express concerns regarding vaping and smoking in the schools.

IV. Report of the Superintendent

Dr. Petrone reported on various events taking place in-district, regionally, and state-wide.

IV.A. Information: Board of Education Student Representative Report

Miss Waterhouse reported on events taking place at CHS, including winter sports and musical rehearsals.

IV.B. Information: Guidance Departments (6-12) Overview

Dr. Petrone introduced Ms. Johnston who began the presentation, which is available through the district's website. Each counselor took a turn sharing a portion of the presentation outlining the Guidance Departments' responsibilities.

J. Beausoleil thanked the counselors for the presentation and for the work that they do. The Board discussed the relationship between the social workers and guidance counselors; the inner workings of Naviance; PSAT/SAT preparation and value; college acceptance work; and career direction.

V. VOTE: Consent Agenda

P. DePaola asked that each item be considered individually.

V.A. Accept the Retirement of Janet Ferguson, GHR Para-educator

MOTION: To accept the retirement of Janet Ferguson

By: E. Eaton

Seconded: P. DePaola

Discussion: E. Eaton noted the retirement of Mrs. Ferguson and how much she will be missed. She thanked her for her service.

E. Marchand also commented on the work that Mrs. Ferguson has done over the years.

P. DePaola wished her well in her retirement.

Result: Motion passes unanimously

V.B. Approve the CHS May Field Experience to Boston, MA

MOTION: To approve the Field Experience to Boston MA

By: P. DePaola

Seconded: E. Eaton

P. DePaola verified this was a one-day trip. That was confirmed.

Result: Motion passes unanimously

VI. Report of the Chairman

J. Beausoleil noted two dates: the Joint Fiscal/Town Finance meeting scheduled for Monday, February 13, 2023 and the Town Council budget discussions with the Board are on March 13, 2023.

VIII. VOTE: Approval of Minutes

VIII.A. Approve Minutes of January 26, 2023

MOTION: To approve the minutes of January 26, 2023

By: E. Marchand

Seconded: C. Williams

Discussion: E. Eaton asked on the bottom of page two the discussion of the motion read, "... it is a two-day event with a break of a day in between."

Result: Motion to approve the minutes with noted change passes unanimously.

IX. Old Business

IX.A. Information: Facilities Update

IX.A.1. CHS Walls

Dr. Petrone noted that the CHS Walls project is complete.

IX.A.2. Cold Weather Review

Dr. Petrone reviewed the various challenges associated with the severe cold snap that occurred last weekend.

IX.A.3. Information and Possible VOTE: Solar Project Update

Dr. Petrone noted that the full Board was present for the discussion at the Fiscal Committee meeting.

Mr. Carroll reviewed the three sticking points of the contract that were discussed between the vendor Greenskies and the Board's attorney.

J. Beausoleil said the Fiscal Committee had consensus to move the agreement forward.

C. Rossignol left the room (8:20 p.m.)

MOTION: To allow Dr. Petrone and Mr. Carroll and any other appropriate district staff member to sign the Solar Power and Services Agreement when it's ready.

By: E. Marchand

Seconded: E. Eaton

Result: Motion passes 6-0 (C. Rossignol absent for vote)

IX.B. Information and Possible VOTE: FY2024 Budget

Dr. Petrone reviewed the new items that have been attached for the Board's information. He noted the new increase is 3.96%.

J. Beausoleil summarized where we are now. Dr. Petrone distributed a possible reduction worksheet.

J. Beausoleil referred to the parent who spoke at audience of citizens about a Freshman Basketball program and said it would be approximately \$10,000 at the minimum to have a new basketball team instituted. Miss Waterhouse said she could see this being a strong program in Coventry.

Dr. Petrone reviewed the reduction worksheet. He said every cut would be painful.

C. Rossignol returned at 8:31 p.m.

J. Beausoleil asked if the Board was comfortable with sending the 3.96% to the Town Council.

E. Marchand said yes, it was a well thought out budget.

P. DePaola said he appreciated the work that went into the budget. He said it is a big number and there are a lot of moving pieces. He said he has been reviewing the recent history of the budgets. He said there was a decline of 22 students from the 2019 budget and that this budget was a 2-million-dollar increase. He also commented on the upcoming negotiations and how they will affect the figures down the road.

The Board discussed the increase in special education services and costs.

P. DePaola said he supports the basketball program.

C. Rossignol noted the distribution of funds between the schools and would like to see it more equitable. The Administration commented on the type of courses that are offered at CHS and the expenses associated with those classes; high school budgets are always larger than the other schools. Dr. Petrone talked about the plan to bring the GHR budget up to date.

The Board discussed various line items, such as PowerSchool; calibration of vision screening equipment; travel expenses for professional development and work related items; supplies at CGS and GHR; and uniform replacements.

C. Williams expressed her concern with the suggestion of eliminating Challenge and Enrichment or Future Problem Solvers. She said sports programs will go on, but those two programs won't.

E. Marchand said he does not see anything in the budget that Coventry students should have to do without.

The Board continued to discuss areas for possible reduction.

The discussion focused on the HEEC budget and the special education population. C. Williams said there are only 18 students that are special needs that are a burden and the 60/40 split doesn't feel like it's fair to the taxpayers - maybe parents need to pay more in tuition. Dr. Petrone explained the reasoning behind the 60/40 split and that in many

towns, the cost of this program is 100% on the schools. He said Coventry is fortunate to have this cost-saving program in place.

The Board continued to discuss transportation for sports, student activity funds, and the importance of athletics.

C. Rossignol said she would support not filling the district-wide social worker vacancy. Dr. Giller talked about how that person has been missed and especially due to the implementation of CT-SEDS.

E. Marchand said the budget has been reviewed in detail and he would not support cutting anything. He added that there may be a cut from the Council, then we will not have a choice.

C. Williams said if we do have to cut, at some point, she supports the reduction of a bus. C. Williams expressed her support to reduce the high school's 600 line.

J. Beausoleil said she does not support cutting a bus. The Board talked about the transportation issues across the state and what the future may look like.

J. Beausoleil reviewed items that were discussed for reduction.

E. Marchand reiterated that we are below 4% and he supports it as is.

M. Kortmann said we will be presented with a cut from the Council.

J. Beausoleil asked if there was a general consensus to add freshman basketball; there was. Mr. Carroll said that would bring us to 4%.

There was not agreement to go to 4%.

There was agreement to add the freshman basketball team, with funding the uniforms for that sport out of the tuition account.

J. Beausoleil asked for discussion on the bus. There was not consensus to cut the bus.

J. Beausoleil asked for discussion on the CHS line item for uniforms and using a different funding source for that item. The Board discussed this option. There was not consensus.

J. Beausoleil asked for discussion on the facilities line for repairs. There was not consensus to reduce this fund.

J. Beausoleil asked for discussion on the 600 line at CHS. J. Beausoleil said she did not agree with a reduction here. E. Eaton said there has already been a 27% cut in supplies at CHS. There was not consensus. C. Williams said the 600 line as a whole has increased 6.5%.

J. Beausoleil asked for discussion on the unfilled social worker position. There was consensus to cut this by a half.

Mr. Carroll said the bottom line is now at \$29,824,330 which is a 3.87% increase over this year's budget.

MOTION: To approve the FY2024 budget at \$29,824,330 a 3.87 % increase over the FY2023 budget

By: E. Marchand **Seconded: M. Kortmann**
Result: Motion passes 4-2-1 (P. DePaola, C. Williams against; C. Rossignol abstains)

X. Report of Board Members

X.A. Information: Fiscal Committee Report, Meeting of February 9, 2023

M. Kortmann reviewed the Management Report. She noted one outplacement has turned the budget upside down by \$37K in one month. She added that the Superintendent has initiated a spending freeze district-wide.

She said there was not much else significant to report.

X.A.1. VOTE: Use of 2% Non-Lapsing Account for Emergency Items

J. Beausoleil said, based on the deficit, there are facilities items that are recommended to be reimbursed out of the 2% account.

MOTION: To authorize the Superintendent to send a request to the Town Council to use the 2% non-lapsing account for items listed for a total of \$43,207.13.

By: M. Kortmann **Seconded: P. DePaola**

Discussion: C. Rossignol wanted to know why the Town wasn't paying for a tree they said had to come down. Dr. Petrone explained it is our responsibility, but DPW did assist with this expense.

Result: Motion passes unanimously

X.A.2. Tuition Fund Expenditures - 2 Year Look Back

J. Beausoleil said the report is provided in response to some questions that were asked regarding this account.

XI. Possible VOTE: Executive Session [Superintendent's Evaluation]

MOTION: Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session for discussions related to the Superintendent's evaluation at 10:35 p.m.

By: C. Williams **Seconded: M. Kortmann**

Result: Motion passes unanimously

XII. Open Session

The Board came out of Executive Session and returned to Open Session at 10:59 p.m.

XIII. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 10:59 p.m.

By: E. Eaton **Seconded: E. Marchand**

Result: Motion passes unanimously

Respectfully submitted:

Kimberlee Arey Delorme
Board Clerk

Approved: February 23, 2023