

**Coventry Board of Education**  
Coventry, Connecticut

**Regular Board of Education Meeting**  
Approved Minutes of June 24, 2021  
Electronic

Board Members Present:

Jennifer Beausoleil, Chairman  
William Oros, Vice Chairman  
Eugene Marchand, Secretary  
Mary Kortmann  
Christina Williams  
Robert Williams

Board Members Absent:

Michael Sobol

Administrators Present:

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

Staff Present: Jennifer DuBois, CGS Teacher; William Trudelle, Director of Physical Plant and Facilities.

**I. Call to Order**

J. Beausoleil called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

**II. Salute to the Flag**

J. Beausoleil led the salute to the flag.

**III. Audience of Citizens**

J. Beausoleil read the Audience of Citizens' emails that were received, which are attached to these minutes.

**IV. Report of Superintendent**

**A. Information: Working with Remote Students – Jennifer DuBois**

Dr. Petrone introduced Ms. DuBois, who was the remote teacher for grades 1 and 2 this past year.

Ms. DuBois shared a presentation on how she used technology to remote teach throughout the year.

C. Williams asked about the lessons learned. Ms. DuBois said all of us had to learn flexibility.

R. Williams asked what she took away from this year that could be applied to the future. Ms. DuBois said innovative practices and new technology tools.

The Board discussed virtual field trips and other aspects of remote learning at this age level.

The Board thanked Ms. DuBois for her outstanding efforts.

Dr. Petrone continued with this report and reviewed various items, including graduation; thanks to the Board for their support throughout the year; Coventry Scholarship Foundation meeting; and the highest number of summer campers at HEEC.

### **B. Information: ARP-ESSER III**

Dr. Petrone said this item will come back, but is on the agenda for a quick update. He provided highlights of various related due dates and percentages of obligation of funds.

### **C. Information: 2021-22 Reopening Plan**

Dr. Petrone wanted everyone to know that the plan is fluid and the basics are being dictated by the State and the Department of the Public Health; including mask mandates. He said everyone is looking forward to receiving updated guidelines and there is no greater goal than to return safely to how things were prior to March 2020.

C. Williams listed the towns with plans that will go without masks, as of now. She advocated for no mask wearing and she would like to see the Board take a stand for this.

Dr. Petrone said if we can do that safely, I will completely agree with that. He reiterated that they are waiting for guidance from the State and the Department of Public Health.

E. Marchand asked about the State influencers. Dr. Petrone said he has not seen one group or another take a lead. He said everyone is looking for the guidance from the Department of Health and the State. He said the data supports no masks for unvaccinated individuals, but he is unsure which way the State will go with it.

J. Beausoleil said CAFE is advocating for the State to provide decisions to districts earlier rather than later.

Dr. Petrone said the rough data on the parents' feedback is mostly positive, with small pockets of concerns with mask wearing, cafeteria seating, and contact tracing.

J. Beausoleil talked about the low infection rates in the schools, but all of that data is based on mask wearing. Dr. Petrone said we had about 200 cases of the flu in 19-20, at just one school, and almost none this past year.

The Board discussed the 21-22 plan related to required seating charts, bus transportation, recess time, specials teachers traveling to classrooms. Dr. Petrone said everything in the plan is required by the State at this time and he wants nothing more than to get back to normal; he said it is a fluid plan and hopefully it can be modified.

J. Beausoleil asked for the Board's thoughts on C. Williams' suggestion on sending a letter to the State about masks not having to be mandatory.

J. Beausoleil said she would like to see a letter written asking for date for guidance to be required. E. Marchand agreed.

E. Marchand said he would like to look at the metrics and would support advocating for folks to get vaccinated. C. Williams said she would support expediting guidance. M. Kortmann said she would support getting expedited guidance on several parts of the school day.

There was consensus that Dr. Petrone would send the letter on behalf of the Board to the state requesting that guidance to districts be expedited.

## **V. Report of Chairman**

J. Beausoleil said she was excited to see the kids at an almost normal graduation. She thanked the staff involved.

J. Beausoleil commented on the challenging year in general and thanked the staff for their efforts.

## **VII. VOTE: Approval of Minutes**

### **A. Approve Minutes of June 10, 2021**

**MOTION: To approve the minutes of June 10, 2021**

**By: E. Marchand**

**Seconded: W. Oros**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

## **VIII. Old Business**

### **A. Information: Facilities Projects Update**

Mr. Trudelle shared a presentation on the planned summer projects, which is available via the district's website.

The Board discussed various details related to the projects.

### **B. VOTE: To Adopt the Final FY2021-2022 Budget**

**MOTION To adopt the final FY2022 budget that was passed at referendum**

**By: E. Marchand**

**Seconded: M. Kortmann**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

### **C. Information: COVID-19 Update**

#### **1. Information: Board Meeting Restrictions and Guidance during COVID-19**

J. Beausoleil talked about existing and due-to-expire Executive Orders and information related to Board meetings.

C. Williams talked about districts that are allowing in person audience of citizens and how they are doing it. She said it is time to see and hear our audience in person.

J. Beausoleil talked about accommodating unvaccinated people. Dr. Petrone talked about getting clarification on social distancing for those folks.

W. Oros asked if the LMC would be available this summer. Dr. Petrone said no, due to the various projects taking place.

J. Beausoleil said we are working to be in person while following guidelines.

## **IX. New Business**

### **A. Information: An Act Concerning Immunizations**

J. Beausoleil noted the attachment available regarding the new law.

C. Williams asked if there is a sanctuary town. Dr. Petrone said, no. C. Williams asked what the percentage of students impacted is. Dr. Petrone said he did not have the specific information, but it has been on the rise.

## **X. Report of Board Members**

### **A. Information: Student Board of Education Representative Interviews**

E. Marchand reported that there were three outstanding candidates to interview. He announced that Celia Delvecchio will be the next representative.

### **B. Information: Fiscal Committee Report, Meeting of June 24, 2021**

W. Oros reviewed the Fiscal Committee meeting including the CrowdStrike software activation on July 1; Athletic Fees collection through PowerSchool; increasing substitute rates; building projects; new grants; and the June bottom line budget is projected to be \$60,000.

#### **1. Possible VOTE: Approve Transfer(s)**

**MOTION: Approve transfer of \$35,000 from 100 Salaries; \$10,000 from 200 Benefits; \$200,000 from 300-500 Purchased Services; \$40,000 from 800 Other as follows: \$170,000 to 600 Supplies and \$115,000 to 700 Property**  
**By: W. Oros** **Seconded: M. Kortmann**  
**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

#### **2. Possible Review of End of Year Projects**

J. Beausoleil said there was a short list of year-end projects and that Fiscal discussed and had consensus to move forward.

#### **3. Possible VOTE: Request to Transfer to 1% Non-lapsing Account**

W. Oros said there would not be any funds to transfer to the 1% account.

## **XI. Adjournment**

**MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 9:31 p.m.**

**By: W. Oros** **Seconded: C. Williams**  
**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

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Respectfully submitted,

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Kimberlee Arey Delorme  
Board Clerk

Approved: July 29, 2021

**From:** [Bridgette Carter](#)  
**To:** [audienceBOE](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Audience statement for BOE 6/24  
**Date:** Wednesday, June 23, 2021 11:30:37 AM

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We all recognized today that health is more than just the physical – it is emotional and psychological as well. Your commitment to helping our staff and students move beyond this pandemic and towards a holistic vision of health is greatly appreciated.

However, the state of CT is currently standing in the way of our children's health and wellness with their current mask mandate. I ask you to please advocate for our children for its removal.

Masks are not healthy for children. They impair their ability to breathe freely, communicate, and socialize. They promote fear and helplessness. They collect bacteria. As a health care professional, prior to the pandemic, it was known that cloth masks and even low grade surgical masks do not prevent the spread of most viral infections. There are scientific reasons why as a healthcare professional, pre-pandemic, when going into the patient bedside with a positive flu case or TB or any other known contagious virus I was to wear full PPE. This includes N95, gloves, face shields, and gowns. Now flash forward to this current pandemic the public has been misguided to think that a cloth mask with spiderman print is going to protect our children from the "deadliest virus" in history..... the efficacy of these masks is questionable at best. We also know now that young children do not carry and spread the virus, that is fear mongering at its best. With Coventry having their teachers vaccinated, what are we waiting for in regards to unmasking our children?

Regarding the back to school plan on which the Coventry Superintendent has sought feedback, I would like to express publicly that the mask mandate especially in our youth is hindering our children. A personal example I had a parent teacher conference regarding my 3.5 year old, the teacher stated that he was shy and didn't talk much. It was shocking, my little boy who doesn't stop talking all day and all night (even in his sleep) goes to school and doesn't talk? I asked my son that evening why, and he said he talks outside a lot because he has no mask, the mask bothers his mouth making him not want to talk. Think about the social damage that could cause if this continues? Am I sending my child to pre-k as a holder, or was the goal for him to play and interact with his peers or was it to build social skills and language building outside of my home? What are the long term social and emotional impact we are making on impressionable young children? I will let you all take that home and think about how the Coventry school systems can take a stand and advocate for mask mandate removal for our children.

I would like to leave you all with one last thought, how can other states all over the US remove the mandate? How are cities that are way more densely populated than small town Coventry comfortable and willing to allow their children to go to school without masks, but we can't? Is this a funding concern for our town? Is this decision being made out of fear? Whatever the answer is, it is time to reconsider and at the minimum make masks optional at the discretion of parents (who know what is best for their children).

Thank you,

From a concerned healthcare professional and parent.

**From:** [Cate Augello](#)  
**To:** [audienceBOE](#)  
**Cc:** [david.augello@gmail.com](mailto:david.augello@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Masks in the fall  
**Date:** Thursday, June 24, 2021 7:11:36 AM

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Good morning Coventry BOE,

I am writing in regards to the upcoming school year to let you know that we strongly hope that you will follow in the footsteps of the Simsbury school district and make masks optional for the upcoming school year.

We understand that last year there was so much unknown about the covid 19 virus and choices were made to get the kids back in school. We absolutely applaud you for your Herculean efforts and are thankful for all your hard work. At that time the infection rate was high, there was no vaccine available for anyone, and you did an absolutely amazing job.

But now we are in a different place, the infection rate is extremely low, the entire school staff was given an opportunity to be vaccinated, and school districts in other parts of the country found that they were able to school for the entire year without masks and without major outbreaks. Research shows that even kids with the severe respiratory disease Cystic Fibrosis faired extremely well when infected with the virus.

It's time to keep reasonable guidelines in place (like extra sanitizing) and move forward without fear while taking into account the massive mental health toll this taking on the youngest members of our society. Please allow parents to choose whether their kids should wear masks in the fall.

Thank you  
Cate and David Augello

Cate Augello Photography  
Child and Family Photographer  
860-918-5372



**From:** [Heather Kinsley](#)  
**To:** [audienceBOE](#)  
**Cc:** [Mary Kortmann](#); [Michael Sobol](#); [Christina Williams](#); [William Oros](#); [Robert Williams](#); [Gene Marchand](#); [Jennifer Beausoleil](#); [David Petrone](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] BOE Meeting  
**Date:** Monday, June 21, 2021 12:43:05 PM

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Dear Board Members,

I am writing you as a parent to reconsider the mask mandates in the fall for our children. My son will be in Kindergarten and is an amazingly sensitive child. He relies on smiles of encouragement, and more than half a face to determine tone of language as do many other children entering school. He is also extremely quiet, soft spoken and shy. More often than not, he gives up when people don't hear him instead of repeating himself. His mask is literally and figuratively stifling his voice. When I registered my child to enter Kindergarten at the end of April, I was surprised at the structure of learning as well as the structure of classes. The rooms seemed to be wiped sterile of not only germs, but of human interaction and emotion. Is this how we want our children to spend their days?

I pulled my son early out of Kindergarten and placed him back in his child care center. When my son came home from his first day of summer program, I asked him what was his most favorite part of the day? I almost lost it when my 5 year old said his favorite part of his day was breathing. This is not right! This is not how our children are supposed to grow up! No 5 year old should have to state breathing as something great they got to do that day.

These kids are not at risk. Community spread has drastically fallen, spreading amongst school populations is almost non-existent, Teachers and staff at schools have had the opportunity to vaccinate, it's time to get these kids back to normal. Give parents the option to remove masks, allow these kids to openly play, share and emotionally connect with each other. Schools are starting to change course on mask mandates in the fall and so should Coventry.

It's time.  
Heather Gregan

**From:** [Jennifer Garlock](#)  
**To:** [audienceBOE](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Citizen audience June 2021  
**Date:** Saturday, June 19, 2021 8:20:47 PM

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To whom it may concern;

My name is Jennifer Garlock, and I am writing to you today on behalf of my children, Emma, Evelyn, and Henry. Emma is an incoming first grader at Coventry Grammar School, and Evelyn will be starting her first year of pre-k at Hale Early Education Center this fall. Henry is a four month old baby who will go to Coventry schools in a few years. First, I would like to say how thankful I am that the children were able to attend school in person this last academic year. However, I would like to stress how disappointed I am in the re-opening plan for the next school year. I was hopeful that I would see some new steps towards a more normal school experience, yet it appears everything is staying the same.

Let us begin with the plan for breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria. I see that the students will still have assigned seating. There is no reason that these kids shouldn't be able to eat with any member of their cohort on any given day. Meals are some of the only social times that the children get in school, and to limit that to just one other child for the entire year is not reasonable. I think of my daughter, Emma, a six year old with autism, who was seated with another child with special needs for lunch. Not only was she unable to have social time with other students from her class, but when that child was not in school, which was often, she had to eat alone. I can't begin to describe how incredibly sad that made her. I hate to think of any kindergartener having to eat lunch alone, but it happened to my girl many times. Imagine what a difference we could make in the children's day if they could eat with whichever classmates they choose. Isn't that the point of a cohort, after all?

This leads me to masks. I am saddened to see that masks continue to be a main focus for children in our schools, when they should be optional for the students whose parents wish them to continue wearing them. The classrooms are hot! There is little to no air circulating as fans aren't allowed, and most classrooms don't have air conditioning. The children's desks are already separated, and the school staff has long had the opportunity to get vaccinated if they so choose. My oldest daughter has reported that even since getting the all clear from the state and our superintendent to take masks off outside that they still must keep them on if they want to play with other children. This is ludicrous, and is not following any of the published guidance. Our children should not have to choose between a mask break on the playground or playing with other children. I was also surprised to learn that outdoor gym class was still a masked event.

Emma, my six year old currently attends a group during the school year to help her grow socially. As a child on the autism spectrum she struggles greatly with verbal and non-verbal communication. The masks continue to hinder her development, and the group isn't as helpful as it could be with everyone's faces covered. How can you teach a child to read non-verbal social cues when you can't see facial expressions? She also struggles with blending letters and their sounds. With the teachers and students masked she cannot see how the adult uses their lips and tongue to form sounds, and they can't see what she's doing in order to correct her appropriately. We're talking about an age group that is learning to read. It's very difficult to read whole words when you struggle with blending letter sounds, and you can't get adequate assistance.

My oldest daughter's early childhood years have passed by. Preschool and kindergarten weren't what they were for you or for me. She did not experience working as a group with her classmates, no cute parent luncheons with musical performances, no preschool or kindergarten graduation. There were no field trips, and there were no field days. There was no sharing or cooperative play. It's too late for her to have those things, and I know that, but it isn't too late for her sister and brother. Those years are not gone for them or hundreds of other Coventry children.

The current positivity rate in our state is less than a half a percent. The infection rate of the population in Connecticut is even less. This is no longer a public health emergency, and it is time that we start taking steps towards normal. Our children need to see the faces of their friends and teachers. I am urging you, please, take this opportunity to advocate for our children the way other Connecticut school districts such as Ellington, Old Lyme, and private schools have. Revise the reopening plan to remove the masking requirement and allow the children to eat

meals with other students within their cohort. In closing, I leave you with this question, if not now, when? If less than a half a percent positivity rate isn't enough for you to move forward, then what is?

Respectfully,

Jennifer Garlock

N hi

**From:** [joshua.garlock](#)  
**To:** [audienceBOE](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] 6/24  
**Date:** Thursday, June 24, 2021 3:41:07 PM

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To the Coventry Board of Education

Hello. My name is Joshua Garlock. I'd like to open by thanking you all for recognizing the importance of keeping our kids learning in the classroom. This year was different than any that we have experienced, yet the kids were able to remain in school. Your flexibility and outside the box thinking this last year did not go unnoticed. However, after reading the reopening plan for next year I am concerned. I, like many other parents was hopeful for a return to a more normal school environment for our children. I am upset to see that the plan for the fall looks exactly like the plan now. I would like to see some changes to this plan before the kids return to school.

Starting with the cafeteria. The children are seated with their cohorts, and that's fine, but there is no reason that they cannot eat with any member of the cohort that they choose. Pairing two kids together for the entire school year and not allowing them to ever eat with anyone else is not based in science nor is it a requirement of the state. The children at CGS specifically are at an age where their social skills are developing rapidly. Limiting which children they can eat with does not help sharpen those skills, but stunts them.

I'd also like to see the return of cubbies and lockers. While kindergarteners couldn't use cubbies, they could use milk crates in the back of their classrooms instead. This makes no sense. Again, what science is this following? My incoming first grader lugged cumbersome snow gear to and from school each day this winter. Her backpack was so stuffed and heavy that she could barely make it up and down the bus steps safely. Not being allowed to leave a set of snow gear in her individual cubby makes no sense when an extra change of clothing is required to be left behind in a community storage bin.

This leads me to the masking requirements. I am angry that Coventry chose to continue masking children outdoors even after the state agreed that children could be outside without them. Masked or isolated isn't a reasonable choice for these kids! When recess is the only opportunity for a mask break, and the only social opportunity in the day the choice is impossible. This goes for outdoor gym class too. The CDC gave the go-ahead for maskless outdoor exercise long ago. However, it seems our town is uninterested in listening to the scientists. Now, onto next year. The numbers in Connecticut have plummeted since the fall, and our teachers and staff have all had the opportunity to be vaccinated. Study after study has been published that shows children are at low risk of severe disease

and spreading infection to others around them. We should be planning on a return to a mask optional environment. As the parent of a child on the autism spectrum I can tell you that allowing the teachers and student to remove their masks if they choose will allow children like mine to fine tune their speech and learn to communicate effectively with their peers.

In closing I'd like to remind you that your responsibility as members of our Board of Education is to advocate for Coventry students and parents. This is your chance to send a message to the state saying that is time to move forward.

Respectfully,

Joshua Garlock

**From:** [william hall](#)  
**To:** [audienceBOE](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] BOE meeting 6/24  
**Date:** Thursday, June 24, 2021 11:15:09 AM

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Dear board members,

Let me open by saying how proud I am that Coventry schools recognized the importance of in-person learning, and pushed through to provide this option throughout the 2020-2021 school year. Thank you.

As planning begins for the 2021-2022 school year, it is abundantly clear that we must not continue the emotionally and psychologically damaging practice of requiring masks in schools.

The emergency we faced in early 2020 is well behind us. Cases, hospitalizations and deaths are extremely low, effective treatments now exist, and our state is among the tops in vaccination rate.

Furthermore, 16+ months of data clearly shows that children are in almost zero danger of severe illness or death from covid, and, due to their largely asymptomatic expression of the disease, are NOT major catalyst for the spread of covid.

The other thing we know after 16+ months of data, is that isolation, remote learning and masking have lead to a huge increase in negative psychological outcomes, including suicide, and an epidemic of anxiety and depression, in children. These actions have also set countless numbers of children back in their education, especially our very youngest children, who rely on facial recognition to learn to speak and process social clues.

To mandate another year of forced masking, when an emergency situation no longer exists, is nothing short of child abuse.

I implore you to make mask wearing for the 2021-2022 school year optional, and allow parents to choose what they feel is right for their children.

Sincerely,  
William Hall  
Coventry resident & father of 3