

Coventry Board of Education
Coventry, Connecticut

SPECIAL Board of Education Meeting
Approved Minutes of August 13, 2020
Remote/Electronic

Board Members Present:

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

Board Members Absent:

Barbara Pare

Also present:

Dr. David J. Petrone, Superintendent
Robert Carroll, Director of Finance and Operations
Patrick Cox, Athletic Director

I. Call to Order

J. Beausoleil called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

II. Salute to the Flag

J. Beausoleil led the salute to the flag.

III. Audience of Citizens

J. Beausoleil read the one email submitted for Audience of Citizens by Erika Labella, which is attached to these minutes.

IV. Report of the Superintendent

Dr. Petrone talked about the planning for the reopening of school and how it has completely consumed administrators and staff. Dr. Petrone continued and talked about the number of parents who attended the virtual Q&A sessions.

Dr. Petrone said at this moment the safest way to open is under the hybrid model (A/B days) and after the first three weeks of school we will reassess how to move forward. He said the biggest driver is student and staff safety; this soft opening will give everyone the opportunity to get acclimated to the new procedures. He continued to review the reasons behind this decision.

Dr. Petrone reviewed the results of the survey:

Regarding the plan for full re-entry of in-school instruction, please choose one of the following:

- I feel comfortable sending my child to school if there is full in-person In-School instruction – 50%
- I will not send my child if there is full in-person In-School instruction – 20%
- I am unsure at this time – 30%

Regarding the plan for the Hybrid Model of instruction, please choose one of the following:

- I feel comfortable sending my child to school with the Hybrid Model in place – 65%
- I will not send my child if there with the Hybrid Model in place – 12%
- I am unsure at this time – 23%

Regarding the rotation days, A-B or AA-BB

- A – B Rotation Days – 18%
- No preference – 43%

Which one of the following option would you prefer?

- Option 2 - Begin with Hybrid Model for the first four weeks of school and then transition to full In-School instruction for all students.

Transportation: At this time, please select one of the following regarding school transportation:

- I plan to transport my child to and from school – 38%
- My child will take school transportation – 35%
- I am unsure at this time – 25%

Will your child have access to reliable internet service, should we have the need to move to hybrid or remote learning?

- Yes – 98%

A. Information: Diversity and Equity at Coventry Public Schools

Dr. Petrone shared the presentation on Diversity and Equity at Coventry Public Schools, which is available on the district's website via the CAFE-meeting public link.

He noted this is a high level overview of our programs and if the Board required additional, more specific information, he would provide that.

E. Marchand commented on what a great overview this was. He asked over what period of time was this developed. Dr. Petrone reviewed the history regarding curriculum development, noting the shift took place almost 9 years ago. He added that a lot of work needed to be done and we are continually making refinements to the curriculum.

R. Williams asked about the goals and if they have changed in the last three years and what has been accomplished. Dr. Petrone talked about the goals and reviewed the work that has been done and he noted that his goal achievement report details the work.

C. Williams asked if the goal related to a plan for the inclusion of more minority students is still a priority if we are struggling to get our own children in school. Dr. Petrone said it is,

and we are all concerned with the situation we are in. He added we will spend this year planning to ensure we can welcome these students for the 2021-22 school year. J. Beausoleil said the Open Choice program also wants to be sure this is a successful program for the children coming and for Coventry. She added everyone agreed, during a pandemic is not a good idea, but the planning could happen now.

R. Williams asked, regarding goal two [recruitment of minority candidates] what the percentage increase for staffing is over the past couple of years. Dr. Petrone reviewed what the district has done to recruit minority candidates and noted that all districts in the northeast corner are struggling. He added, this is a rather new goal and it needs to remain a focus. R. Williams asked for a percentage for minority teachers across the state and where does Coventry stand. Dr. Petrone said he would find that information and forward it to the Board.

R. Williams talked about the lack of activities and clubs for students of color. Dr. Petrone said usually the clubs come from a student interest. He said, the lack of interest does not mean we are "okay" with it. J. Beausoleil said the teachers are good at supporting a club, if there is interest. Dr. Petrone talked about the CREC program and the comprehensive plan they have in place, beyond clubs, when placing students in schools.

The Board discussed various aspect of Coventry's student body and staff.

Dr. Petrone said we have an obligation as a district to address these issues. He said it is a challenge to recruit minority candidates, but we won't give up. He commented on the location of Coventry and how hard it is to attract candidates of all kinds.

R. Williams and C. Williams asked questions about the GHR slide and who is in the group and what the morning meetings look like. Dr. Petrone said he would find more information and noted that in the meetings they talk about empathy and how to accept others who might be different.

R. Williams asked how this works at the middle school. Dr. Petrone talked about the middle school slides. R. Williams asked for examples. Dr. Petrone said he would provide that to the Board.

C. Williams talked about Homosexuality and Transgender curriculum. She said, while she is accepting, she does not want her children to be taught about it by the school. She asked if there is a parent opt out. Dr. Petrone said this is not one of the items you can opt out of, it is part of the educational program. C. Williams asked about the unisex bathroom. Dr. Petrone said we have one, which we have to by law.

The Board continued and talked about various aspects of the curriculum and how it changes and is developed.

R. Williams asked for details related to reports given through the Say Something program. Dr. Petrone said he could not provide details, but reviewed a synopsis on the handful reports, which included items like bullying and reports of friends not in a safe place.

V. VOTE: Consent Agenda

A. Accept the Retirement of Heidi Holever, Para-Educator

B. Accept the Retirement of Kim Kozlowski, Para-Educator

MOTION: Accept the Consent Agenda items as presented
By: E. Marchand **Seconded: W. Oros**
Result: Motion passes unanimously

VI. Report of Chairman

J. Beausoleil said she was pleased to be a part of the conference call with the Open Choice coordinator and looks forward to that program developing.

J. Beausoleil thanked the staff for all of their efforts related to the reopening process.

VIII. VOTE: Approval of Minutes

A. Approve Minutes of July 30, 2020

MOTION: To approve the minutes of July 30, 2020
By: C. Williams **Seconded: M. Kortmann**
Result: Motion passes unanimously

IX. Old Business

A. Information: COVID-19 Update/Opening 2020-21 School Year

1. Information: Athletics Fall 2020

Mr. Cox said the CIAC has come up with multiple variations. He said there were many flaws with all of the plans. He said just this morning the DPH and the governor's office provided more input. He believes we are back to the drawing board, but the CIAC thinks they can still make adjustments and proceed. Mr. Cox said he, Dr. Petrone, and Mr. Blake do not believe this is conducive to the educational environment. He said right now we are in a holding pattern and we are changing minute by minute.

J. Beausoleil asked what other Athletic Directors are thinking. Mr. Cox said everyone knows there are so many moving parts and CIAC has gone from one extreme to another. He said you have to consider schedules and how even practice goes against all of the precautions we are putting in place.

Dr. Petrone said the majority of the area districts are going to be hybrid. He agreed with Mr. Cox that participating in sports goes against the health and safety precautions we are putting place. He said he does not feel it is a good idea to move forward; we cannot ignore DPH, who does not believe the current CIAC plan is a good one. Mr. Cox said there are a lot of questions that need to be answered before he is comfortable moving forward.

Dr. Petrone asked do we really want to add another distraction that will take away the focus on opening up school. He said everyone else is saying no athletics. He said he does not want to take on another challenge and add sports.

The Board talked about moving fall sports forward to later in the year. Mr. Cox said this has been discussed, and he does not believe it is realistic.

Mr. Cox said at this point it is prudent to be patient. Dr. Petrone said he suggests delaying a decision; and hold on participating until more information is received.

E. Marchand said this makes sense, but asked if we are just going to wait and see, are we going to cancel practices/conditioning. Dr. Petrone said his recommendation is to put everything on hold; Mr. Cox agreed.

The Board thanked Mr. Cox for his efforts.

Mr. Cox left the meeting.

J. Beausoleil turned the conversation to the reopening of schools.

Dr. Petrone talked about the decision that was made to go hybrid for the first four weeks of school. He said it will be the safest way to open for students and will give us time to evaluate the data. He said he wants to test the plan on a smaller scale. He said the number one concern is student safety. He said he realizes there will be disagreement.

J. Beausoleil asked about the hybrid schedule. Dr. Petrone said it is A-B, because there was not a prevalent preference by parents and this provides students more consistent contact with their teachers.

C. Williams noted the results from the parent survey and discussed how many students would actually be in person, in hybrid mode compared to full in-person. Dr. Petrone said there was a significant number who said they were undecided and we have to account for those. He added that the parent survey data was just one bit of information that was used to make the decision.

Dr. Petrone said it is really important for teachers to develop relationships with kids and the hybrid model will give us that opportunity. He said this will enable teachers to be alert to students who may need assistance if we have to move to full remote learning.

J. Beausoleil reminded the Board that three weeks in, the situation will be reassessed. She asked what will be used to make a decision. Dr. Petrone said guidance that has been provided by the State and DPH. He said he will be in contact with Rob Miller [EHHD] to consult to make decisions.

Dr. Petrone said this is the safest way to proceed at this time.

E. Marchand asked for clarification regarding three or four weeks. Dr. Petrone said we will assess at the end of three weeks, and give parents enough time to make the change, if necessary.

C. Williams asked how families who will distance learn will get paperwork. Dr. Petrone said mostly electronically. He said our hope is to offer a comparable remote program.

C. Williams talked about students that will be going to school four days. Dr. Petrone said this is for the most needy students in the special education program. He said this was dictated by the SDE and we have only about 15 students. He added this will avoid compensatory issues for the districts as well.

R. Williams asked about the concentrated curriculum for the hybrid model and how do we know there is consistency in teaching across the district. Dr. Petrone said the district is providing pacing guides to the teachers.

Dr. Petrone asked the Board to give the plan a chance; we have proven ourselves in the past. He said this is a less than ideal situation and nothing will replace traditional learning.

C. Williams asked for a highlight of the software that would be used. Dr. Petrone said it is included in the plan and he will provide an updated list to the Board.

C. Williams asked what is the criteria to go to distance learning. Dr. Petrone said the matrix is being provided by the State and we will look at the data from the health department and how many cases we have increasing in our area. He said the decision will be made in consultation with the health department.

Other items of discussion included: How Distance Learning days under the hybrid model would look different than Distance Learning from the spring and a proposal by R. Williams to use Google Meets during Distance Learning days to expand our educational opportunities to four days.

J. Beausoleil said this will be continued on future agenda items.

B. Information: Facilities Update

Dr. Petrone reviewed the status of various facilities projects including, CGS Parking Lot; Classroom Preparation; CHS Cafeteria Project; Fire Door Project; CHS Walls Project; Ventilation Work; Water Systems Work; Training for Facilities Staff; LED project; Field Irrigation System; and PPE purchases.

E. Marchand asked about the CGS parking lot grading issue. Dr. Petrone explained it was in one area and they caught it and fixed it.

X. Report of Board Members

A. Information: Student Board of Education Representative Interviews

E. Marchand noted that he and R. Williams met with both students. He said they both were outstanding and Emma Murphy was chosen.

Dr. Petrone commented on looking forward to working with Emma in this position.

R. Williams said he enjoyed the experience and both candidates were fantastic.

B. Information: Fiscal Committee Report, Joint Meeting with Town Finance on July 30, 2020 and Fiscal Committee Meeting of August 13, 2020

W. Oros talked about the joint meeting of July 16 and items that were reviewed such as the opening of schools and COVID-19 expenses and the end of the year budgets. He said it was nice to hear the Chair of the Town Finance Committee voice his support of the schools.

W. Oros continued and reviewed the discussions of the August 13 meeting, including how to provide COVID-19 expenses information and the HEEC operating budget.

1. VOTE: Approve FY21 HEEC Operating Budget

MOTION: Approve FY21 HEEC Operating Budget as Presented

By: M. Kortmann

Seconded: E. Marchand

Result: Motion passes unanimously

C. Information: Transportation Committee Update

J. Beausoleil said the Committee reviewed the cleaning process that the bus company will do on the buses related to COVID-10. She continued and said the routes were similar to the ones last year. She added the kindergarteners would get door to door service, where physically possible for buses. She said they also discussed how the hybrid model would work for scheduling related to transportation.

C. Williams asked if maps were provided showing old and new routes.

J. Beausoleil said no, but Mr. Carroll was able to pull up routes virtually to be reviewed.

C. Williams asked if enough corrective action has taken place. J. Beausoleil said we asked a lot of questions and the hope is yes.

Mr. Carroll said we are a week behind. Dr. Petrone said we are having concerns and issues with M&J meeting timelines. He emphasized this does not have to do with the bus drivers.

C. Williams asked if bus drivers were consulted. E. Marchand said no, which was probably due to the pandemic. He said he would not let this point go and will continue to stress the importance of this.

XI. Possible VOTE: Executive Session (Bargaining Unit Negotiations)

MOTION: Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session for discussions related to bargaining unit negotiations with the superintendent present at 10:41 p.m.

By: C. Williams

Seconded: R. Williams

Result: Motion passes unanimously

XII. Open Session

The Board came out of Executive Session and returned to Open Session at 11:10 p.m.

XIII. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 11:17 p.m.

By: C. Williams

Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: Motion passes unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberlee Arey Delorme
Board Clerk

Approved: August 26, 2020

From: [Erika Labella](#)
To: [audienceBOE](#)
Cc: [Beth Giller](#); [David Petrone](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Summer School
Date: Thursday, July 30, 2020 9:52:20 AM

We are writing to express our utmost gratitude to the staff of Coventry Public Schools that put together a summer school program amid a very challenging time in public schooling.

After what was a challenging spring of distance learning for many children, the administrators, teachers, para educators, nurses and custodial staff worked to implement a plan that allowed our children, who are faced with learning and other challenges, to have 4 weeks of in person instruction! From day one, to this last week, the entire staff has been positive and encouraging! Personally, our two boys didn't balk at getting out of the house and to school for 8am! When asked if they were ever nervous, anxious or worried while in school they responded with "No, it is just the same school but with masks on!" That response is a testament to the adults who worked tirelessly to create a learning environment that was safe, happy, exciting, fun and supportive!

We are sure there were many moments of worry, uneasiness and maybe frustration from some of the staff but it was never conveyed to us or our children. For that we are grateful. Now our boys have no hesitation to jump back into school in a few weeks! As a family we are aware that things will look different, be different and may change over the weeks and months but knowing that the entire staff of our schools can execute the plan(s) settles any worry we may have.

THANK YOU again to the staff of summer school for their work these last few weeks!
We wish them a few weeks of rest and relaxation!

With great appreciation -

The LaBella Family