

**Coventry Board of Education**  
Coventry, Connecticut

**Regular Board of Education Meeting**  
Approved Minutes of July 30, 2020  
Remote/Electronic Meeting

Present Board Members:

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

Administrators Present:

Dr. David J. Petrone, Superintendent of Schools  
Robert Carroll, Director of Finance and Operations  
William Trudelle, Director of Physical Plant and Facilities

**I. Call to Order**

J. Beausoleil called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

**II. Salute to the Flag**

J. Beausoleil led the Salute to the Flag.

**III. Audience of Citizens**

J. Beausoleil read four emails that were submitted for Audience of Citizens from: Jeanie Smith; Jennifer Petro; Christina Pierce; and Nicole Bingaman. Those emails are attached to these minutes.

**IV. Report of the Superintendent**

J. Beausoleil thanked the administration and staff for the work they have done on the reopening plan.

Dr. Petrone said there has been a lot of support from the parents and that fuels us to move forward.

Dr. Petrone gave kudos to Lois Hasty and HEEC staff for their hard work in running the preschool summer camp.

Dr. Petrone touched on other items such as summer school ending on July 30 and how well it went; the work of the reopening committees; the informational videos being developed for students/parents; and thank you notes sent.

**V. Report of Chairman**

J. Beausoleil again gave kudos to the staff for keeping up with the daily changes coming in from the state.

J. Beausoleil talked about the Board meeting in person again, possibly by the end of August. Dr. Petrone said that they believe they will be able to meet in the Administration Building conference room safely, after a few measurements.

## **VI. Communications**

J. Beausoleil referred to the letter of agreement for the Boys Lacrosse co-op letter from Rockville High School.

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

### **A. Approve Minutes of July 16, 2020**

**MOTION: To approve the minutes of July 16, 2020**

**By: C. Williams**

**Seconded: E. Marchand**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

J. Beausoleil moved item "New Business" to next on the agenda.

## **VIII. New Business**

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

Mr. Trudelle shared a SlideShow presentation which included projects completed and the projects in process. [This presentation is available on the district website, under the CABE-meeting public link.]

C. Williams asked about the CHS Walls Project and how many areas of risk are there that are not being addressed. Mr. Trudelle said this is not a safety issue; that was never an issue. Dr. Petrone said an outside engineering firm did a separate evaluation of the building and it was determined the building has never been unsafe; it was a building code item.

E. Marchand spoke as member of that committee, and noted the engineer who came in said the building is as safe as any other school in town.

C. Williams asked how many other places are there with code issues, and shouldn't we try and get a waiver. Dr. Petrone reviewed the long history of this project and the waivers that have been applied for and noted some were granted. He said we have come a very long way from where we started.

J. Beausoleil recognized the tremendous amount of work that is being done and it has been expanded with the COVID-19 needs.

Dr. Petrone asked Mr. Trudelle to review the unit ventilator updates. Mr. Trudelle said each classroom has a unit ventilator and they are usually set at 15% for fresh air; now they are set to bring in 100% fresh air and they will run all of the time. He said fans are not allowed due to facilities guidelines.

C. Williams asked if we have looked at mini-splits rather than the window units. Dr. Petrone said the expense to address this district-wide is immense. M. Kortmann said all of

the unit ventilators are original to the building and replacing them district-wide has been on the list for 10 years or more. M. Kortmann reviewed the details of the work of the Energy Committee regarding ventilators.

C. Williams asked about the flushing of the water system. Mr. Trudelle said this gets the water moving and gets fresh water in and we are doing it more now because it has been sitting. C. Williams asked why we would continue doing it once schools starts. Mr. Trudelle said the backflow needs to be cleared.

B. Paré talked about supplies for the teachers who are on the front lines, and she said she is concerned and wants to be sure they have a quick and fluid process to get new supplies. She said she wants to be sure the supplies are the quality they need to be and is worried about staff getting their own of a lesser quality. Dr. Petrone noted that there are five days of proposed training for staff before school begins and this topic would be covered for staff.

R. Williams asked if the Board could see what the schools look like before school starts, in person. Dr. Petrone said it is difficult to schedule a tour before school starts due to everything going on. J. Beausoleil said perhaps the Board could view the orientation/welcome videos that are being developed.

R. Williams asked if a test run of the cleaning has been done. Mr. Trudelle said yes. R. Williams said the Board could be the guinea pigs and walk through the schools and sit in desks and then the schools could be cleaned.

C. Williams asked if the virtual welcome could be brought to the next meeting. Dr. Petrone said we will get the videos in place as quickly as we can; he hopes that the Board trusts the folks that have been hired to do the work. He continued and tried to explain what the staff is up against with all that is before them.

C. Williams talked about the parent survey and if parents had been given input into the plan development and had chosen distance learning, would the decisions be different; she wondered if the survey is being sent out too late. Dr. Petrone said he did not believe it is too late. He added, from the other districts he knows of that sent the survey out earlier, they are having to resend it because the data is no good; it was too soon. He said parents needed to be able to see the different options we could provide before they could give feedback.

C. Williams said she is reviewing the other plans in the state and she believes there was room for input and it is felt it wasn't desired.

J. Beausoleil said that within the committees that developed the plan there were committee members who were staff members who were also parents in town; they served as those representatives as well.

Mr. Trudelle noted the LED project which was just approved today.

J. Beausoleil thanked Mr. Trudelle and his staff for their hard work.

Mr. Trudelle left the meeting.

## **IX. Old Business**

### **A. Information: Planning for the 2020-2021 School Year**

#### **1. Coventry's Reopening Plan**

Dr. Petrone began by letting the Board know we have been able to solve the one-to-one device issue and he noted that grades 6 and 7 will be allowed to take the devices home.

Dr. Petrone shared the Reopening Plan presentation with the Board, which is available on the district's website. He noted all of the different groups that participated in the development of the plan, including administrators, staff, teacher union representatives, and parents.

J. Beausoleil said she appreciated that the plan was available ahead of time for Board members.

Dr. Petrone said there is an attachment that is an Executive Summary that will be shared with parents.

B. Paré said she has two or three random questions. She began saying students having to attend school this way, will result in building routines and habits. She asked what suggestions could be given to parents now on how to build those habits.

B. Paré asked what happens when children decide not to follow the rules and the vulnerable are at risk. She wants to be sure all students know there are rules to be followed and what is expected ahead of time; and that folks know if there are consequences and what they would be.

Dr. Petrone said summer school could not have run better; it is a great example - the students did the best. He added that personal hygiene, which we have been hearing about since March, needs to continue. He said if they do not follow the "rules" we will work collaboratively with the student and the parent to see what the real issue is. He said they don't want it to be a discipline issue. B. Paré said clear communication is key.

E. Marchand said the superintendent and staff did an incredible job in developing this level of detail of a plan. He asked what percentage of parent input will carry the question in the survey. Dr. Petrone said, right now the feeling is, we can safely open schools fully in-person. He continued to talk about the work and dedication that went into developing this plan and all of the variables.

Dr. Petrone talked about the survey and he said he is hopeful that the Board will allow the administration to move forward based on the answers.

E. Marchand spoke to wellness and said the nurse plays a pivotal role. He said it seems like an awful lot for them. Dr. Petrone said they are looking at subs for a month to assist as need. He said all of the administrators and administrative designees are back-up to the nurses for administering medication. He continued that they will watch the situation carefully.

C. Williams talked about what the plan is for substitutes. Dr. Petrone said he is working with Kelly Services to secure 4 substitutes per site to work beginning in September. He said they will readdress needs mid-September. He added there is a permanent sub through the ECSU internship program.

R. Williams asked about the mental health part. Dr. Petrone said we believe our plan will allow our support staff to rotate through and touch base with all of our students. R. Williams talked about his experience working at UCONN and that peer support is key.

C. Williams asked about the transition criteria for moving to the different learning models and why ours is not more detailed. Dr. Petrone said it is dangerous to lay out a specific criteria; it needs to be on a case by case basis. He added that they will be in constant communication with Rob Miller from EHHD. He said he will be relying on the health experts to make specific decisions. He said such "black and white" information is dangerous.

C. Williams asked how it will look when siblings are infected or exposed. Dr. Petrone said it will include contract tracing and they are waiting for guidelines on how to inform parents. He added that he will trust the guidance from the EHHD.

C. Williams said it seems pretty fluid on how we will go in and out of the instruction models. Dr. Petrone said yes. C. Williams asked about the devices for the K-5 students and how they will get them if we have to go to remote learning quickly. Dr. Petrone said it would be within a day or two, if they are unable to take them home in one day. He said parents have been very patient and flexible.

C. Williams noted remote learning and how will those at home learn. Dr. Petrone said the hope is the classroom teacher will provide instruction through a webcam and the student can participate remotely along with assignments they will complete on their own; it will not be the same level of instruction as being present in class.

M. Kortmann talked about different schools possibly being on different plans/schedules due to what is needed due to the health numbers.

C. Williams asked about transportation and the hybrid schedule and students sorted alphabetically, rather than by location. Dr. Petrone said they consulted with the bus company and they believe it can be done, without much additional time. He said it is not out of the ordinary to have blended families with different last names and we have addressed that list and we believe this is effective. C. Williams asked if there will be a cost savings with Wellness Wednesdays, Dr. Petrone said, as he sees it, there would be.

J. Beausoleil said with the hybrid model the state is reducing the number of students on the bus, we do not know M&J's response to the cost and she said she is not as optimistic that we will save money. She believes it will depend on M&J.

J. Beausoleil said regarding the options for hybrid, one of the advantages to alternating groups is, you are isolating the building from cross-mingling between the two groups that are created. She said her choice is AA/BB option, as any one group is away for a longer period of time.

C. Williams said option A/B might lend itself to better distance learning, but she sees the point of AA/BB, from a contamination point of view.

M. Kortmann said she agrees with J. Beausoleil also, as she thought about it from a health/safety point of view. She said the groups would not see each other for 10 days. She said, whatever the parents vote for is fine, but the AA/BB makes more sense health-wise.

J. Beausoleil asked the Board if they are okay with the Superintendent making the decision on the hybrid schedule based on the parents' response and the local health department.

There was Board consensus for this.

C. Williams asked what social distancing looks like in the other buildings, beyond GHR. Dr. Petrone said we are close, with some classes relocated. He said they looked at all spaces.

C. Williams talked about the playgrounds and asked how they will keep kids social distancing. Dr. Petrone said he would get that information to the Board.

Regarding the teachers' union, Dr. Petrone said we are making progress in discussing changes to the working conditions; we are moving in the right direction; they want to do what is best for students.

The Board talked about the staff input into developing the plans. Dr. Petrone said you have to set realistic expectations and expert input was needed. He said there has been communication with staff throughout.

J. Beausoleil said due to the timing, was the Board okay to consider just the Calendar item and table the rest of the agenda. There was consensus.

## **2. VOTE: Approve Adjustments to 2020-2021 School Calendar**

Dr. Petrone explained that the State gave districts flexibility in the required number of days to provide for staff development. Dr. Petrone reviewed the details of the changes.

**MOTION: Approve the Adjustments to 2020-21 School Calendar as presented**

**By: E. Marchand**

**Seconded: R. Williams**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

## **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 10:52 p.m.**

**By: B. Paré**

**Seconded: M. Kortmann**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

## **XII. Open Session**

The Board came out of Executive Session and returned to Open Session at 11:00 p.m.

## **XIII. Adjournment**

**MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 11:01 p.m.**

**By: M. Kortmann**

**Seconded: R. Williams**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

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Respectfully submitted,

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Kimberlee Arey Delorme  
Board Clerk

Approved: August 13, 2020

**From:** [Jeanie Smith](#)  
**To:** [audienceBOE](#)  
**Cc:** [audienceboe@coventry.org](#); [dpetrone@coventeyct.org](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] HVAC systems making schools safer from COVID19  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 29, 2020 12:03:25 AM

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Dr. Petrone & BOE

Now that we've been addressing re openings doctors have been giving more feed back and advice on making indoor situations safer. The thing I've heard the most is HVAC and air filtration systems. So there is air flow that keeps the mist from hanging around in rooms for hours. And an air conditioning system with the right filters will filter the virus right out of the air our children are breathing. Our schools dont currently have air conditioning but now is the time to do it. I have spoken to many parents who agree that doing this would make them feel so much better about sending our children back to school for in person learning. The kids and teachers get pretty hot under normal circumstances and wearing masks all day is going to make them even hotter. That means the kids are going to be more likely to touch the mask, pull it off or play around with it. Our teachers have been bringing fans from home into their classes for years so the kids are more comfortable under normal circumstances, they wont make that much of a difference now. We don't want to move the airborne virus around the room to spread to more children; we need to filter it out of the air. I know it's a budget hit, but if it ensures our children are more comfortable wearing masks all day at school and litterally filters the virus out of the air that our children are breathing then now is the right time for us to do this. They have air conditioning systems in hospitals that have simple built in UV lights that kill viruses, combine that with common household air filter that you can buy at home depot which stops viruses from getting through. I think this needs to be a huge part of what we need to do to make the schools safe for in person classes. This will especially make a huge difference with younger kids. My son is 9, in 4th grade. I want him to go back to school more than ever, but I won't put his safety at risk. I think this is the time to take the hit to our budget for our children's safety. Our children's, teachers and staffs safety is what matters most.

Will you please seriously consider this.. even if we need to take donations. This will be a big investment in our children's safety. That is not lost on myself or any of the parents I have talked to. But given the current pandemic we need drastic action to protect our children, teachers and staff. Our children mean everything to us.

Thank you very much for your time,

Jeanie Smith

(Mother of Logan Sharp, soon to be 4th grader )

**From:** [Jennifer Petro](#)  
**To:** [audienceBOE](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] BOE audience of citizens letter 7/30/20  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 29, 2020 7:34:58 PM

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I am writing in response to Board of Education member Christina Williams' decision to post a link to the Reopening Plans for the district on multiple social media platforms in advance of tonight's meeting.

While these materials were publicly available with the agenda for the meeting and this was not a formal breach of protocol, it certainly was a breach of good faith and an intentional circumventing of plans articulated by the district, most specifically by Dr. Petrone. In emails to the district, he shared his plan to present this material in a contextualized format and allow for Q&A follow up with families.

If the intention of this was to provide families an opportunity to thoughtfully digest information about the plan, then it should have been posted from the Board of Education as a whole and with a solicitation of where and how to bring these reflections and questions forward for consideration. Instead it was dropped with no context and no path to follow relative to questions or concerns. This was an incredibly unhelpful and disruptive action, one that fanned the flames of uncertainty and anxiety across social media over the last two days.

While I imagine everyone wants to have answers and some sense of clarity about plans for the fall, this was a failure of leadership from her. Whether impulsive or intentional, it was the wrong decision and disrespectful of what I imagine has been hundreds of hours of intellectual and emotional labor by the authors of these documents. We have an incredible group of educators in this district, and I look forward to hearing directly from them tonight.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Petro  
17 Deborah Drive

**From:** [Christina Pierce](#)  
**To:** [audienceBOE](#)  
**Cc:** [David Petrone](#); [Jennifer Beausoleil](#); [William Oros](#); [Gene Marchand](#); [Mary Kortmann](#); [Barbara Pare](#); [Christina Williams](#); [Robert Williams](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] School reopening  
**Date:** Thursday, July 30, 2020 9:50:56 AM

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Dear BOE,

My family had hoped to choose distance learning due to high risk family members and younger children who are going to have a hard time following the important new safety protocols. With the current plans for distance learning requiring so many live sessions, this option will not be possible for our family with multiple children.

So questions I now have are:

**Spacing between desks**-If all students go back what would be the average spacing between desks in a CGS classroom be? Is there any way to do 6 feet of space for safety, especially in the younger grades?

**Policies about COVID cases**-With CGS having 200 cases of the flu last year, and the school remaining open as normal, will more detailed policies be put in place before September in regards to when cases of COVID do arise? If a child in one class is positive does that class move to distance learning for 14 days? What about siblings of those in that class? Are we going by the number of cases or the percentage of students in the district? At what point will the district move a class, grade, school to a distance learning or hybrid plan?

**Hybrid plan**-Is there an option that would be more convenient for families that still have to work? Such as making Monday the half day/staff development day to accommodate Monday holidays, while having group A go every Tuesday and Wednesday, while group B goes Thursdays and Fridays?

I appreciate all the hard work and time that the administration, teachers, staff and the BOE have put into the plans to reopen the schools during this unprecedented time while understanding things are constantly changing and affected by the control of the state and federal government to help keep our school community safe. I am greatly saddened by the lack of parent input, feedback, and access to information to this point. The parents should have been involved in the planning committees and provided surveys prior to this point to help shape draft of plans. Families are also Stakeholders in our school community and have always been a big part of supporting our schools in so many meaningful ways. In a time where communication between schools and families is more important than ever before, we have not been viewed as Stakeholders over this summer.

Thank you,  
Christina Pierce

**From:** [Nicole Druley Bingaman](#)  
**To:** [audienceBOE](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Thank you  
**Date:** Thursday, July 30, 2020 3:51:06 PM

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Hello,

This is Nicole Bingaman of 343 Hannah Lane. I just wanted to take the time to thank Dr. Petrone, the Board of Education, the administrators and the committees that have been working this entire time to try to figure out the best and safest way to reopen Coventry Schools. Your efforts are not unnoticed and the stress you've been experiencing making all of these incredibly hard decisions and creating plans are appreciated by many parents and students. We know you can't please everyone, but we thank you for all you're doing!

I realize you cannot answer this during a meeting, but my question to you is what can the parents of Coventry schools do to help make things safer for in person learning? Do you need us to fundraise for plexiglass barriers? Do you need us to build outdoor classrooms? Please let us know how our community can help because I know so many of us are more than willing to do what we can during this crisis.

Please feel free to contact me through email or by phone.

Thank you again,  
Nicole Bingaman

Sent from my iPhone