

**Coventry Board of Education**  
Coventry, Connecticut

**Regular Board of Education Meeting**  
Approved Minutes of October 08, 2020  
Remote/Electronic

Board Members Present:

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

Also present: Emma Murphy, Student Board of Education Representative

Administrators Present:

Dr. David J. Petrone, Superintendent of Schools  
Robert Carroll, Director of Finance and Operations  
Joseph Blake, CHS Principal

**I. Call to Order**

J. Beausoleil called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**II. Salute to the Flag**

J. Beausoleil led the salute to the flag.

**III. Audience of Citizens**

J. Beausoleil read the two emails submitted for Audience of Citizens (Emma Eaton and Dan Uriano), which are attached to these minutes.

**IV. Report of Superintendent**

Dr. Petrone noted that the administrative goals and October 1 staff list are attached. He reviewed various meetings he has attended and different happenings taking place in the district.

E. Marchand asked how everything is going in the second week of in-person learning. Dr. Petrone said everyone is happy to be back and see some normalcy. He added that the students and teachers have been great.

Dr. Petrone again thanked staff for working through the challenges.

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

Emma Murphy said the second week of in-person is going well and the students are happy to be back. She talked about everyone following the rules, seniors being able to use their senior privileges, and athletics taking place. She also congratulated those students who took the AP tests last year and noted the outcomes were amazing.

## **B. Information: Coventry High School Advanced Placement Data 2019-20**

Mr. Blake shared the Advanced Placement Data 2019-20 presentation.

Mr. Blake noted that in a very difficult year, the students performed very well.

C. Williams referenced the bar chart of Advanced Placement Performance and the students with the lower scores. Mr. Blake said there are students who take on a tremendous challenge by taking AP tests and even if they don't do well, they will do better in college by taking it. Mr. Blake said there is tremendous growth.

C. Williams asked, for those students who did poorly on the exam, does it negatively impact their grade. Mr. Blake said, AP tests do not impact the students' class grades. Dr. Petrone verified it does not negatively impact the students' overall grade.

C. Williams asked for the average year to year instead of the mean noted on the last slide. Mr. Blake said he would provide that in the 5 year report.

W. Oros asked how many high schools have open enrollment. Mr. Blake said he did not know that specific number. W. Oros said in his experience, not many. Mr. Blake agreed.

M. Kortmann said it seems we are getting better scores from the classes with the teachers who are chosen to score AP tests. Mr. Blake agreed and added the longer the teacher teaches the class the better they get as well.

R. Williams asked what our comparison to our DRG is. Mr. Blake said districts don't get a DRG comparison from the College Board. He said to get a sense of how we are doing, we have received excellent rankings on the Washington Post rankings and through Niche. Mr. Blake said he believes we are doing very well in our DRG if you compare our SAT scores.

R. Williams asked if any recent changes have been made to the AP curriculum. Mr. Blake said most changes are done through teachers' delivery and pacing and that is the priority this year. There was a discussion surrounding how AP curriculum is managed and taught.

J. Beausoleil said AP curriculum is submitted to the College Board annually and is accepted, so we are in compliance. She continued that it is not usual for Board members to have open access to curriculum. She suggested R. Williams work with the Board's Curriculum Liaison regarding any further curriculum questions. R. Williams said that would be great.

R. Williams asked about AP Seminar and AP Research. Mr. Blake said they are the components of AP Capstone. He continued that it is very rigorous.

J. Beausoleil said she is excited about the continuous increase in the scores. She said she is proud that we offer the open enrollment.

## **V. Report of Chairman**

J. Beausoleil thanked everyone for taking their part in making it possible to have full in-person learning.

J. Beausoleil noted that the Capital budget process has begun. She said budget review will come to the Board beginning in January.

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

### **A. Approve the Minutes of September 24, 2020**

**MOTION: To approve the Minutes of September 24, 2020**

**By: W. Oros**

**Seconded: M. Kortmann**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

### **B. Approve the Minutes of August 26, 2020**

**MOTION: To approve the original minutes of August 26, 2020**

Discussion: R. Williams asked on page 6, paragraph 5, to add "R. Williams addressed his concern over low AP scores such as chemistry (1.71) and calculus (2.53). M. Kortmann and Dr. Petrone felt that the scores were adequate. J. Beausoleil claimed any Coventry student can take an AP class in contrast to similar districts. R. Williams maintained that the scores recorded are not satisfactory for the students of Coventry."

M. Kortmann said we did not say it was adequate. She said it was a long discussion and it included that we have open enrollment and our averages could not be compared to other schools.

C. Williams suggested wording it as "M. Kortmann and Dr. Petrone elaborated on the lack of comparison because Coventry has open enrollment." R. Williams said he was okay with that. M. Kortmann agreed, or we can leave the whole thing out because it was a long conversation.

E. Marchand said we have a motion and a second, he asked to move the motion.

**Result: Motion passes to approve the minutes without modification 4-3 (B. Paré, C. Williams, R. Williams against)**

## **VIII. Old Business**

### **A. Information: COVID-19 Update/Opening of the 2020-21 School Year**

Dr. Petrone said most of this information was discussed under his report. He mentioned that the issue of snow days is being addressed at the State level. He said they are considering allowing remote learning on snow days. Dr. Petrone said he is working on the details to request that we have the allowance for up to 2 snow days that could be remote learning days.

Dr. Petrone reviewed phase 3 of the Governor's reopening plan. He said he is waiting for clarification from the Eastern Highlands Health District for some school related specifics.

Dr. Petrone said currently Football is conditioning. He said they are still waiting to see if the CIAC will implement a delayed season, which Coventry may not allow because it would be very difficult to accommodate. He noted we are providing more athletically than other districts, including middle school sports.

## **IX. New Business**

### **A. Information and Possible VOTE: Class of 2021 Graduation Requirements**

Mr. Blake noted that the Board graciously suspended the community service component for the class of 2019. He is asking that the Board do this again, as there are not many opportunities and would put kids at risk.

#### **MOTION: To waive the requirement noted in policy 5127 for the class of 2021 to complete 10 hours of community service**

Discussion: C. Williams said if we can all come back to school successfully we can offer our community 10 hours. She said she doesn't believe waiving this requirement at this time is the right thing to do.

B. Paré said she gave this some consideration and is asking about a virtual option. She said she is afraid this is a missed learning opportunity. Dr. Petrone said he asked Mr. Blake to look into other opportunities. Mr. Blake said there are several issues, one is the safety/health issue of having students go out into the community when they are in school in-person; there just are not that many opportunities; and vetting and approving virtual opportunities would be near impossible. He said we require every student to complete that requirement; some students don't have transportation due to the current circumstances; or are in remote learning for specific safety reasons.

B. Paré said she believes there is a lot more out there than we think there is; for the kids it is something that would open a whole new world.

J. Beausoleil said we are not currently allowing volunteers to come in. B. Paré said it would all be virtual and there is a lot of work to be done. J. Beausoleil said it takes a whole other direction, which we may not be prepared for. Dr. Petrone reiterated that there would be considerable staff work needed to vet and approve these types of opportunities.

M. Kortmann said she believes organizations are not interested in outside people coming in, right now. She talked about the risk of the environment the students would be going in. C. Williams said there is much you can do without going into large groups. She continued there is work to do to make our community better; including cleaning up a park. She said we are setting their bar too low. She has faith this generation will give back to the community.

E. Marchand said this is not about having faith in our kids. He said he is big on student empowerment. He said he agrees with what Mr. Blake said; why add another variable to the equation. He said it makes sense putting it on hold for a year.



**MOTION: To authorize the superintendent to send a letter of request to the Town Council for use of the 1% account to purchase the Utility Vehicle that is on the CIP**

Discussion: C. Williams said her position has not changed since the last time this was discussed. She noted the difficulty of use she has with her own utility vehicle. She does not think it is a good use of funds and an increase in liability.

R. Williams said he agrees with C. Williams. He stated it is not a good use of funds as the future can be uncertain.

J. Beausoleil said it will reduce labor costs of staff who are currently consumed with COVID-19 related items. She said this is one of the reasons it is being brought up at this time. E. Marchand said this also has to do with snow blowers that are beyond their life. Dr. Petrone agreed, noting that the Town has a very similar vehicle and it is industrial type, and there is great ease of use.

B. Paré said there was new information given at Fiscal which is, it allows staff to get in, and in a hurry, allows them to do their jobs during a snow storm.

Dr. Petrone said much information was provided the last time this was discussed. He added that the custodial and maintenance staff are stretched very thin due to COVID-19 precautions and this would assist during the winter months. He said Mr. Trudelle has truly pressed for this item. Mr. Carroll said under normal circumstances during a snowstorm, you can cut some corners, but this year, with all of the requirements, we will not be able to cut any corners.

B. Paré said it would alleviate stress for staff and improve their wellness overall at work. Dr. Petrone, agreed that is one aspect. He said we just don't have the personnel to adequately do the snow removal and do the cleaning required. Dr. Petrone said this is a true concern and we are informing you we need it now. B. Paré said she would be okay bringing it to the Council considering the times we are in.

C. Williams asked about the timing to use the equipment and what if we have used these funds on a utility vehicle and they are needed for new guidelines from the CDC related to the pandemic. Dr. Petrone said at this point it looks like some issues are loosening up, not tightening up. He added that schools have spent thousands of dollars on CDC requirements that have then changed. Dr. Petrone continued and spoke about the age of the current equipment.

E. Marchand gave a lot of weight regarding Mr. Trudelle coming to ask for this item.

R. Williams noted that we now have online learning and we could be using that during snow days. Dr. Petrone said ultimately we need them back to school and we need to be able to clear the snow eventually, regardless.

W. Oros noted he is in favor of the purchase.

Dr. Petrone gave details on the snow removal.

**Result: Motion passes 5-2 (C. Williams and R. Williams against)**

**C. Information: Transportation Committee Report, Meeting of October 8, 2020**

B. Paré reported on the Transportation Committee meeting. She said they discussed and voted on a repeal of a previous decision. She said the committee denied the appeal.

C. Williams asked for an explanation. B. Paré said all information was reviewed including the number of students that were walking the route and based on the information reviewed, she agreed to vote with the majority to deny the request.

B. Paré added, based on the current policies we are in line. She also mentioned the traffic information provided by the police department, including serious accidents which were very low for the years.

C. Williams noted that cars go really fast down Ripley Hill Road. There was discussion regarding the traffic pattern on Ripley Hill Road.

**D. Information: Wellness Committee Update**

B. Paré said the Committee met last evening. She said the goal was to discuss the school year goals; how they are going to connect nutrition with mental and emotional wellness; Instagram account use; and student representatives. She said the meeting was productive and she feels positive moving forward.

**XI. Adjournment**

**MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 9:19 p.m.**

**By: E. Marchand**

**Seconded: M. Kortmann**

**Result: Motion passes unanimously**

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Respectfully submitted,

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Kimberlee Arey Delorme  
Board Clerk

Approved: October 29, 2020

**From:** [Emma Eaton](#)  
**To:** [audienceBOE](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] AOC 10/8  
**Date:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 10:52:28 AM

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Good evening,

I am writing tonight with support and thanks for our school's staff as we have transitioned from the Hybrid Model to the Full-In Model. This is an instance where every single staff member and every family in the district have worked together as a team to make sure our schools are safely open and running smoothly.

As a parent with students learning remotely, I especially want to commend the remote teacher at CGS. This is a role that just a few weeks ago didn't exist, and she (and all the people supporting her in the background) has created a learning environment for remote learners that is as rich, involved, and engaging as it can possibly be. Her humor, care, and professional talent shine through each day and I am thankful for this remote teaching model for my first graders each day.

Because we are learning remotely I also want to send my thanks to Cathie Drury, Jeff Spivey, and the entirety of the ed tech team who are working absolutely tirelessly to iron out any hiccups in the process and resolve issues with both speed and accuracy. Ed Tech doesn't often get the chance to be in the spotlight, but these members of our district staff are absolutely invaluable to us.

Additional thanks to the building administrators are due, as their care in choosing staff members to execute the remote learning experience is showing in the virtual classroom communities these staff are creating.

The adjective soup we have been using for 2020 hasn't changed. This year is unexpected, unprecedented, unique, challenging, and for the adults in it 2020 has also been a year with no plan or roadmap. Under Dr. Petrone and the administrative team's leadership I am proud of what we are providing for our students both in the buildings and remotely.

One last thing I wanted to mention in this letter: at the last meeting there were some technical glitches (thanks 2020) that were resolved. However, as a viewer of these meetings I do want to observe that some members do not always mute their microphones when not speaking and this can be extremely distracting or make the meetings very hard to hear as a viewer, since their sound stream overtakes the audio. I'd ask, for the sake of community members trying to participate, that Board members please be careful to mute their audio when not actively speaking. I know using this digital platform is a learning process for many, but as audience members we would appreciate being able to hear everyone.

Emma Eaton  
41 Sean Circle



**From:** [Dan Uriano](#)  
**To:** [audienceBOE](#); [Dan Uriano](#); [newsdesk3@wfsb.com](#); [David Petrone](#); [Katie Uriano](#); [Tim.Ackert@housegop.ct.gov](#); [David Golas Jr.](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comments - October 8th  
**Date:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 6:05:33 PM

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Dear Coventry Board of Education,

Since I can not participate in person to the audience of citizens, I ask that you read my concerns:

My name is Dan Uriano - 36 Windswept Way, Coventry, CT. Please read this email and include it as part of public record of the at your October 8th meeting.

I have grave concerns about the stretch of road from Windswept Way to Captain Nathan Hale Middle School. I believe the town is opening itself up to a negligent suit, but more importantly placing children in harms way. I believe the Board, should take the following two actions:

1. In the immediate future, a bus stop should be provided at the junction of Windswept Way and Ripley Hill Rd.
2. Advocate for, and coordinate with, the Town Manager to install a walking path along this stretch of road, as it similarly exists on the opposite side of the high school parking lot.

Please consider the following hazards and concerns:

- The road barely meets the CT statute for adequate width, which I believe is 22ft.
- There is no shoulder for pedestrians (children) to avoid cars and distracted drivers.
- The pitch of the grass and the vegetation make it difficult for pedestrians (children) to avoid oncoming cars.
- There are currently 23 students expected to walk this stretch of road.
  - Nearly all of them are able to get transportation from their parent(s) because everyone in the neighborhood acknowledges how dangerous this stretch of road is. We'd be happy to secure signatures from the neighborhood and present them if necessary.
  - This number will increase to 34 Students in the next two years that are expected to walk this stretch of road, would that be safe?
  - How many students with 504 plans or IEPs live in this neighborhood? Could their disabilities place them in greater danger considering the existing hazards?
- Ripley Hill Rd. joins two major state roads - Route 44 and Route 31. This is the major throughway, not only for general traffic looking to travel North to South, but also the route that parents, students, and buses travel from North Coventry.
- The Middle School and High School are the highest concentration of people at any given time, over 1000 people. This is the "hub" of the town; therefore, this is "not like any other rural road in Coventry;" this is a thoroughfare for the highest number of people concentrated in town.
- When school is in session, the mornings and afternoons feature a high volume of traffic, many of whom are your students and families. Because of the high level of

traffic, as well as speeding, distracted driving, and the amount of new (teenage) drivers, there is frequently a Coventry Police car parked near the softball field. Police data alone will not provide a true picture of this, as they are not always there.

- The berm, vegetation, and natural elements at the south side of Windswept create a blindspot for pedestrians (especially those under 5ft) and vehicles. My son has almost been hit on his bicycle several times by cars cutting the corner.
- Similar to the last bullet, the hill from Lewis Hill up Ripley Hill creates a "mirage" whereby you can not see pedestrians (again, especially those under 5ft) until the last second.
- In the winter, snow piled on the sides of the roads completely eliminates anywhere a pedestrian can go in the case of a car that doesn't move over or distracted driver.
- This route is pitch black, with no streetlights when the sun goes down. I'd encourage you to see what it looks like on Halloween. Again, police have to station a patrol car because of how unsafe this stretch of road is.
- Foggy or dusk/dawn lighting makes it extremely difficult to see pedestrians, even when wearing bright clothing.
- The opposite side of the high school parking lot (on Ripley Hill Rd.) does have a sidewalk. I'd be curious to know how many students coming from that direction are expected to walk, versus the volume present in our neighborhood. As a side note, Town Manager John Elsesser specifically told me that the reason for the sidewalk on that side was for safety for children walking to school? How is that section (300 meters south) any different? When comparing both, it's clear that section is far safer even in the absence of walkways.
- Sixth grade students are expected to walk with approximately 1/3 of their body weight in their backpacks. How will their reaction time be hindered by this weight should they need to react?
- Our neighbor was walking her dog on a 4ft leash along this stretch of road. Because there is no shoulder, and due to distracted driving by an inexperienced driver, her dog was hit, while on leash.... keeping that in mind with respect to compensatory education, I ask that you think about it from this prospective...

The Town Manager, Board Members, and Superintendent of Schools are public servants, charged, first and foremost, with the health, safety, and well-being of the residents. You have a **duty** and an obligation to ensure the safety and well-being of residents. Clearly, the town felt a pathway was necessary from Main street to the High School, otherwise the town would not have recently installed a walking path there... yet, the stretch of road where the highest concentration of children are expected to walk remains untouched and unsafe. When, not if, a child is struck by a car, you (the town) will have **breached its duty**. If a lack of action about a known hazard **is the causation of** injury or harm, the town will be liable for damages.

It is my understanding that the town plans to extend a walking path from the corner of Ripley Hill Rd. to Lisicke beach. Is that correct? Again, how does that interplay with "rural charm," and how could that possibly be more important than the safety and well being of a highly trafficked pedestrian stretch of roadway such as Ripley Hill Rd.? Please consider the safety of these students. Are you willing to fully certify that this stretch of road is fully and completely safe?

Thank you.

This was taken shortly prior to kids needing to walk to school.



Can you see the walkers (parent and three kids)?

