

Coventry Board of Education
Coventry, Connecticut

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Approved Minutes of Thursday, May 26, 2022
Administration Building Conference Room

Board Members Present:

Jennifer Beausoleil, Chairperson
Eugene 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

Audience: Rebecca Knauf, Grade 1 Teacher; Laila DaSilva, GHR Social Worker; Donna Zuber, CNH School Psychologist; Emily LeBlanc, CHS Math Teacher; Dr. Beth Giller, PSSS Director; Michele Mullaly, Director of Teaching and Learning; Ronda Carrie, CGS Principal; and Jennifer DeRagon, GHR Principal.

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.

J. Beausoleil asked for a moment of silence for the souls lost in the Uvalde, Texas school shooting.

III. Audience of Citizens

Chrissy Williams, 436 Ripley Hill Road, began by speaking about this week's school shooting in Uvalde, Texas. The statement she provided is attached to these minutes.

IV. Report of the Superintendent

Dr. Petrone reviewed various events taking place in the district, region, and state.

IV.A. Information: Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) Update

Dr. Petrone introduced Dr. Giller who shared a presentation as an update for the Board on this year's work involving DESSA. Staff from the district who joined her were: Ms. Knauf, Ms. DaSilva, Ms. Zuber, and Ms. LeBlanc. That presentation is available via the district's website.

C. Williams asked if the questions involved are the same for students K-8. Dr. Giller said they modify as the students age.

C. Williams asked if students we thought should have been picked up, weren't. The team spoke to the results and noted, if there was a surprise, they can look at the detailed data by student to investigate.

P. DePaola verified that this data will be trackable as it relates to a student's academic achievement over years. The team confirmed.

E. Marchand said he really likes the connection to the teacher and how systematically this is done.

IV.B. Information: Administrator Goal Achievement Reports 2021-22

IV.B.1. Coventry Grammar School

Dr. Petrone introduced Ms. Carrie who shared the Goal Achievement presentation for CGS for the 21-22 school year. The full report is available on the district's website.

C. Williams asked about growth in grade one vs grade two on the literacy SMART Goal on the BAS. Dr. Petrone said the information can be provided. It was noted that the pandemic and remote learning could have affected the results.

IV.B.2. G. H. Robertson School

Ms. DeRagon shared her presentation on the GHR Goal Achievements for 2021-22; the report is available on the district's website.

C. Williams talked about the goal for achievement and asked, since we are achieving the goal, should we be increasing that goal. Ms. DeRagon agreed that would be her thought for the 22-23 school year.

IV.B.3. Pupil and Staff Support Services

Dr. Giller reviewed the Goal Achievement presentation for PSSS for the 2021-22 school year. That report is available on the district's website.

The Board discussed CT-SEDS and the transition that is ahead; the ABA program and implementing it with fidelity; and para-educator training.

V. Report of the Chairman

J. Beausoleil said there is so much great stuff going on in the district, especially in the spring. She noted the annual Spring Staff Celebration held earlier in the evening. She continued and talked about the recently unveiled Track Signage/Record Board. She mentioned the Board's professional development held earlier in the evening.

Finally, J. Beausoleil talked about the failed referendum and asked community members to come out and vote.

VII. VOTE: Approval of Minutes

VII.A. Approve Minutes of Regular Meeting of May 12, 2022

MOTION: To approve the minutes of May 12, 2022

By: E. Eaton

Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: Motion passes unanimously

VII.B. Approve Minutes of Special Meeting of May 19, 2022

MOTION: To approve the minutes of special meeting of May 19, 2022

By: E. Marchand

Seconded: P. DePaola

Result: Motion passes 6-0-1 (C. Rossignol abstained)

VIII. Old Business

VIII.A. Information: FY23 Budget

J. Beausoleil noted the attachments, which included the FY23 Budget presentation, the summary, and the full budget.

VIII.B. Information: COVID-19 Update

Dr. Petrone noted the email communication sent out to parents earlier in the day, which is available via the district's website and included COVID-19 reminders.

IX. New Business

IX.A. Discussion: Review of Policies

J. Beausoleil reviewed the policy procedures.

IX.A.1. Discussion: Policies for Deletion (To be warned for a VOTE at a future Board meeting)

E. Eaton noted two of these policies are duplicates (9270 and 9360).

IX.A.1.a. 5113B Attendance (CHS Credits)

Dr. Petrone noted the 5113B Attendance policy and that it is now covered under state law.

C. Williams asked about where to find attendance guidelines. Dr. Petrone said he would provide that information to the Board.

P. DePaola said he would rather not delete this, but would rather see it updated. E. Eaton noted we have a detailed policy on attendance #5110 and an Administrative Regulation #5110-A.

The Board discussed attendance as it relates to passing classes.

J. Beausoleil asked Dr. Petrone to provide additional information to the Board ahead of the vote to delete the policy.

IX.A.1.b. 8110 Role of Board and Members (Duplicate of 9270)

There was no discussion.

IX.A.1.c. 8342 Construction and Posting of Agenda (Duplicate of 9360)

There was no discussion.

IX.A.2. Discussion: Policies for Revision (To be warned for a VOTE at a future Board meeting)

IX.A.2.a. 1251 Prohibition Against Smoking

It was noted that “school property” was defined more clearly. There were no questions.

IX.A.2.b. 3300-3323 Purchasing

P. DePaola asked about what defines “personal property.” Dr. Petrone noted Shipman and Goodwin has said this could be tangible and/or intangible property and that the language is from statute and should stay as is.

IX.A.2.c. 4216.2 Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug-free Workplace

It was noted that the school property was defined more clearly. There were no questions.

IX.A.2.d. 9360 Construction and Posting of Agenda

The Board discussed the approval process for items to be added to an agenda; how community members can request items; and the number of days needed to request that items be placed on an agenda. There was consensus for the policy to go back to committee.

X. Report of Board Members

X.A. Information: Scholarship Committee Report, Meeting of May 19, 2022

E. Marchand reviewed the Scholarship Committee meeting, noting he is never disappointed when meeting with our students.

XI. Possible VOTE: Executive Session (Security Update)

MOTION: Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session for discussions related to a district security update with the Superintendent and district security specialist present at 10:03 p.m.

By: C. Williams

Seconded: E. Marchand

Result: Motion passes unanimously

XII. Open Session

The Board left Executive Session to vote to extend the meeting past 11:00 p.m.

MOTION: To waive Board policy 9362 to extend the meeting past 11:00 p.m.
By: M. Kortmann Seconded: E. Eaton
Result: Motion passes unanimously

The Board returned to Executive Session.

The Board came out of Executive Session and Returned to Open Session at 11:35 p.m.

XIII. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 11:35 p.m.
By: E. Marchand Seconded: C. Williams
Result: Motion passes unanimously

Respectfully submitted:

Kimberlee Arey Delorme
Board Clerk

Approved: June 9, 2022

From: [Christina Williams](#)
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Fwd:audience of citizens
Date: Thursday, May 26, 2022 7:12:10 PM

I come before you tonight with a heavy heart and a call to action. What happened Tuesday is unacceptable. See school shootings don't just happen – they are preventable. T

After Parkland, an in depth investigation was completed dissecting the events that led up to that tragedy and the findings were published in the “Why meadow died”

The parkland shooter showed serious signs of violent and erratic behavior for years. He mutilated animals, brought bullets to school, made death threats and attempted suicide. And everyone — local and federal law enforcement, school staff, teachers, students and his family — knew it.

“Students told the media after the tragedy that 18-1958 had committed all sorts of crimes in school without consequence. If he'd been arrested, he could have been prohibited from buying a gun. Or maybe an arrest would have made the FBI follow up on, rather than drop, tips that 18-1958 might shoot up the school.” Students told reporters that he “threatened to kill them; he brought knives and bullets to school; he brought dead animals to school and bragged about mutilating them,” so many warnings existed before the killings, How could all the crimes go ignored?

“Every institution around Cruz, especially the school system, failed.”

The investigation team learned that failure to interdict violent students is a much bigger problem. In 2013, the Broward school superintendent rose to national fame in an article asserting, “Harsh discipline policies are falling out of favor across the country, but Broward County, Fla., is hoping to do away with them entirely.” Superintendent Robert Runcie had previously implemented leniency policies in the Chicago Public Schools earning praise from President Obama and spawning a leniency initiative dubbed PROMISE. After the Parkland murders, a reporter found that the shooter had been ordered to attend PROMISE in middle school but skipped out with no effort made to enforce his attendance.

The problem is much bigger than Broward County. The investigation cites 27 state laws mandating reductions in suspensions expulsions and/or arrests for crimes committed at schools. Pressure on schools to reduce discipline prevents educators from reporting student crimes and violent students are left in place where they disrupt classrooms instead of being moved into therapeutic settings that can treat their dysfunction.

In Broward County, the school district and sheriff's office agreed to allow students three misdemeanor crimes per year before any report was filed with law enforcement. The negligence extended outside the schools. Sheriff Scott Israel had publicly stated, “We measure our success by the kids we keep out of jail, not by the kids we put in jail.” This mirrored schools across the nation that had also established campuses as “no-go zones for law enforcement.”

Nationwide, teachers and security personnel were punished for reporting student misbehavior. They made tremendous allowances for fear of being sued by parents and suffering retaliation from school administrators. Educators in Buffalo, NY complained about, “No consequences for anything.” A

teacher elsewhere said, “ I was told by an administrator...that he rips up paper write-ups [of disciplinary infractions].” A Broward School Resource Officer said an administrator told him they should not arrest students even for committing felonies for which state law mandates arrest. Pollock concludes that the culture of tolerance assured students that the school would run interference on their behalf keeping them out of trouble even if they brought guns to school, sexually assaulted students and teachers, stole, trespassed or committed other crimes.

He didn't slip through the cracks, his problems were deliberately ignored.

In a troubling Part II of the investigation, the authors study his upbringing, whose mother had a violent criminal history related to drugs, his adoption and home life, early violent acts, and school history. He was only briefly treated at a school for students with extreme behavioral disabilities, returning to Marjorie Stoneman Douglas despite continued obsession with violence because he asked to be “mainstreamed.”

He instigated a particularly vicious fight, school officials ordered students who took videos of the fight to delete them, fearing embarrassment if the footage showed up on YouTube. Frightened, the students begged for help, complaining that he had “threatened to kill them and/or their families; he had threatened to rape people; he brought dead animals, knives, and bullets to school.”

The mental health agency charged with ordering his treatment interviewed him four days before February 14, 2018 but failed to refute the obvious when he denied suicide attempts while displaying cuts he had made on his arms. A frightened school counselor appealed to the mental health agency that had treated him, but the agency “decided [he] didn't even merit observation,” although he had stated his intent to obtain firearms. Sheriff's deputies responded to his home 45 times prior to his killing rampage but when a citizen warned about his Instagram of guns and comments that he planned to kill people in his school, law enforcement declined to so much as write a report.

In 2016 Cruz purchased his first firearm. By then, he had turned 18 and many options to intervene had evaporated. His adoptive father died and then his mother. When his cousin asked the sheriff's office to seize his firearms in the wake of his mother's death, a deputy refused to write a report about her concerns.

The negligence compounded on the day of the shooting. A gate that school policy mandated should be locked was routinely left open for the convenience of loading buses of special education students. A campus security monitor riding a golf cart around the perimeter recognized Cruz as he got out of an Uber ride carrying a black canvas rifle bag. The monitor considered approaching him but was afraid to, so he radioed another security monitor.

Either man could have called a “code red” warning, but did not, later stating that training allowed “code reds” only if a gun was seen. Additionally, the principal had mandated that only he was allowed to call a code red, although he was out of the country on vacation with his girlfriend. The assistant principal who was in charge said the volume on his portable radio was turned down so he did not hear the first gunshots nor any of the early radio warnings about 18-1958's intrusion on to campus.

The perimeter security monitor radioed another monitor to report 18-1958 was headed into Building 12. This monitor, presuming 18-1958 planned to go upstairs, ran into a stairwell intending to visually observe the intruder. 18-1958 instead loaded a magazine for his rifle and started killing.

After warning a freshman to get out of the way, he shot and injured a band student on her way to the bathroom, then killed three students. The second security monitor heard the shots and still did not call a code red. Finally, a fire alarm activated, prompting the assistant principal to evacuate the building, exposing a host of students to deadly danger. Students rushed out of classrooms and crowded into the hallways. If a code red had been announced, their teachers would have secured them inside the classrooms.

We know how this story ends.

How is Coventry's story going to end.

I heard the presentation on “restorative justice” a couple of meetings back, I heard the parents and students as they discussed the bullying and lack of acknowledgement or consequence. I hear the dialogue about keeping our children’s record clean.

I then recall 9/11. 9/11 happened once, not 39 times in 2022 alone. Not Because we implemented gun control – but because we took swift policy action and prevented it.

I challenge this district – this administration – to take a hard look at our restorative justice policies – and ask is this best for coventry?