

Coventry Board of Education
Coventry, Connecticut

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Approved Minutes of Thursday, September 30, 2021
Administration Building Conference Room

Board Members Present:

Jennifer Beausoleil, Chairperson
William Oros, Vice Chairman
Eugene Marchand, Secretary
Mary Kortmann
Michael Sobol
Robert Williams

Board Member Absent:

Christina Williams

Also Present:

Celia Delvecchio, Student Board of Education Representative

Administrators Present:

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

Audience members present: Dena DeJulius, CNH Principal; Jennifer DeRagon, GHR Principal; Joseph Blake, CHS Principal; Ronda Carrie, CGS Principal; Michele Mullaly, Director of Teaching and Learning; Matt Kyer, CGS Library Media Specialist; student presenters and their families; and a few citizens.

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.

III. Audience of Citizens

J. Beausoleil read the email received by Dawn Vieira, which is attached to these minutes.

Linda Blakesley, 27 Barry Avenue, was present to welcome everyone back to school this year. Her comments are attached to these minutes

Caroline Davis, 302 Pine Lake Drive, said she was present to speak in favor of continuing the mask mandate. Her comments are attached to these minutes.

Emma Eaton, 41 Sean Circle, was present to speak in favor of continuing the mask mandate. Her comments are attached to these minutes.

IV. Report of the Superintendent

IV.A. Information: Coding with Legos with Matt Kyer, CGS Library Media Specialist

Dr. Petrone introduced Mr. Kyer who was present with current third grade students Tyler Nguyen and Nora Bagley. Mr. Kyer and the students shared a presentation on the Coding with Legos program, which took place over the summer.

J. Beausoleil commented on how positive the program is and how glad that girls are involved.

M. Sobol asked where we go next. Mr. Kyer said it will be an enrichment program at CGS. Tyler talked about his favorite part of the program.

Dr. Petrone continued his general report and talked about the school year being underway for one month. Dr. Petrone also noted that J. Beausoleil has earned the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education's Master Board of Education Member designation.

IV.B. Information and Welcome: Student Board of Education Representative Celia Delvecchio

Dr. Petrone welcomed Celia Delvecchio to the table. E. Marchand talked about the process of reviewing candidates, all of whom were outstanding. W. Oros agreed and noted the confidence and poise that the students bring to the interviews.

Miss Delvecchio reported to the Board and said how excited she is to be here. She added that students are being flexible and are going with the flow.

IV.C. Information: 2021 Assessment Results Summary

Dr. Petrone introduced Dena DeJulius, who led the principals in sharing the Assessment Results Summary presentation [which is available via the district's website].

It was noted throughout the presentation that Coventry scored higher than many other districts in higher District Reference Groups.

J. Beausoleil gave kudos to the staff for the hard work done and said it is so evident in these scores.

Dr. Petrone thanked the Board and asked for their continued support.

E. Marchand commented on how everyone came together to contribute to this outstanding outcome.

Dr. Petrone talked about the teamwork that is present in the district and how everyone is involved, no matter their position.

R. Williams asked for more specific details related to the scores. Dr. Petrone explained that the data is being drilled down internally and the administrators will use the information to make the decisions necessary to move forward.

R. Williams requested the individualistic SAT data be shared and Dr. Petrone said he would not be sharing the information. Dr. Petrone explained that if the data was shared it could be misrepresented and could also be too identifiable; he noted these were the same concerns expressed last time the information was requested.

R. Williams asked how Advanced Placement scores were administrated. Mr. Blake answered that it was by class and they were done in-person.

V. Report of the Chairman

J. Beausoleil reported on various things taking place in the district. She recommended the middle/high school internet safety presentation that is coming up on October 20, which is a webinar that people can attend virtually.

VI. Communications

J. Beausoleil reviewed the three attachments: State Board of Education letter to Boards of Education; Town Ordinance on no smoking; Governor's Executive Order No 14.

VII. VOTE: Approval of Minutes

VII.A. Approve Minutes of September 9, 2021

MOTION: To approve the minutes of September 9 2021

By: W. Oros

Seconded: E. Marchand

Result: Motion passes unanimously

VIII. Old Business

VIII.A. Information and Possible VOTE: Microgrid Update

Dr. Petrone explained the most recent item up for discussion; a different conflict waiver needs to be signed.

MOTION: To authorize the Superintendent to sign the conflict of interest waiver as provided, once reviewed by the attorney representing the district

By: W. Oros

Seconded: R. Williams

Result: Motion passes unanimously

VIII.B. Information and Discussion: Policy ByLaw 9150 - Official Duties – Chairperson
(To be warned for a VOTE at a future Board meeting)

E. Marchand said the Committee reviewed the policy and added one word "written" to the final sentence in section 9.

J. Beausoleil noted this is the first reading of this new version and it will come before the Board for a vote at the next Board meeting. There were no objections.

IX. Report of Board Members

IX.A. Information: Transportation Committee Report, Meetings of September 16 and 23, 2021

M. Sobol reviewed the recent Transportation Committee meetings. He said they talked about the shortage of bus drivers and the state mandates for vaccination requirements for bus drivers. He gave kudos to Nicole Irvine at M&J for her collaboration in working with the district. He added that the situation is still very fluid right now. He continued that we were close to losing fall middle school sports, but was happy to report that a solution was found.

IX.B. Information: Policy Committee Report, Meeting of September 30, 2021

W. Oros noted that the Committee met earlier in the evening and policies will be coming forward for the full Board's review.

IX.C. Information: Community Conversations

R. Williams talked about the Community Conversations that are taking place. He said they are working on getting more community involvement.

X. 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 and Director of Finance and Operations present at 9:38 p.m.

By: E. Marchand Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: Motion passes unanimously

XI. Open Session

The Board left Executive Session and returned to Open Session at 9:55 p.m.

XI.A. Possible VOTE: Approve the Agreement between the Coventry Board of Education and the Nurses Union, July 2020 – June 2023.

MOTION: To approve the Agreement between the Coventry Board of Education and the Nurses Union, July 2020 - June 2023

By: M. Sobol Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: Motion passes unanimously

XII. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 9:56 p.m.

By: W. Oros Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: Motion passes unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberlee Arey Delorme
Board Clerk

Approved: October 28, 2021

From: [Dawn Vieira](#)
To: [audienceBOE](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] **updated**Addressing mask mandates
Date: Thursday, September 30, 2021 3:27:25 PM

From: Dawn Vieira
Date: September 30, 2021 at 11:44:31 AM EDT
To: audienceBOE@coventryct.org
Subject: Addressing mask mandates

Dawn Vieira
337 Swamp Rd

As representatives of the children and parents of this school district, you need to consider and logically look at the continued mandated mask wear in our district. We are NO LONGER in a public health state of emergency so why are we continuing this emergent mitigation strategy? The CDC states "there is no evidence that masking children in schools is effective". You, as a board, collectively are obligated to represent ALL parents and children of this district(not just those who are agreeable to your policies). It is your job and responsibility to speak up and represent for us ALL. It is our children who are the LEAST vulnerable to this virus, why are we continuing to follow strategies that are not only unlawful but have shown NO evidence of their effectiveness. The WHO "explicitly recognized that the decision to mask students carries with it academic and social harms for children and may lack clear benefit". Wearing masks 7-8 hours a day, 5 days a week is not only causing our children to become more withdrawn and more susceptible to issues with depression and anxiety but also to serious physiological symptoms such as headaches, lethargy, changes in mental capacity/function due to lack of proper O2/CO2 exchange. In addition, this continued mask wear makes our children MORE susceptible to other illnesses by harboring bacteria and reinhalation of these aerosolized particles the masks are supposedly meant to protect them from!! Our children ARE NOT EXPERIMENTS!!!

These mitigation strategies of social distancing and mask wear are far worse than this virus in their very real, detrimental growing impacts. The social and emotional effects of these restrictions far outweigh any health risks to our children.

How often do you take mask breaks in your daily routine? You are free to choose when you've had enough confinement and need to breathe fresh air? At the middle and high school levels "mask breaks" are non existent. Our children are not given this opportunity throughout the day and are scolded for wanting to do so. Our children are being treated like prisoners in this current public school system and needs to STOP!

It appears that those most at risk(the elderly, obese, those with pre existing health issues and co-morbidities) are willing to force the young and healthy who remain least susceptible to COVID, to suffer these irreparable harms in unproven science. It IS NOT our childrens' burden to bear to sacrifice their own health and well

being for others nor be expected to do so.

WE ARE NO LONGER IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY nor are we at pandemic levels of infection(even with the delta variant considered). We have reached herd immunity, why are you continuing to pose this burden on our children?!!! This mitigation strategy is simply unproven, unjustifiable and unlawful, our children should not be coerced to comply with these mandates.

As it states in the reply to my freedom of information request presented to Dr. Petrone at the end of August:

“if a student removes a mask, they are simply asked to place it back on-board policy DOES NOT dictate how many times students are permitted to remove their face masks”. Denying a student to free and equal education for refusing to consent to this experimental healthcare intervention IS COERCION.

If we are not afforded our legal right to choose by making masking optional, you will be opening this district to future litigation. We DO NOT consent, we have never been presented with informed consent documents nor does the school system have legal OSHA standards in place in handling these masks as biohazard material. Where are the donning and doffing protocols/procedures in place for masking? If these masks are doing what they are intended to do by trapping hazardous COVID particles, there should be biohazard waste receptacles in every classroom and common area of the school....where is this mitigation strategy?? In the hospital setting, healthcare workers are specifically trained on how to properly don and doff(put on and take off) PPE(personal protective equipment)which, by medical standards, a mask is considered. Are the children being medically trained in these techniques to not recontaminate themselves or those around them? If these masks are so bio hazardous, are the children being offered replacement masks each time they are exposed to one another in a classroom setting? Are they properly replacing their masks after each class? If not then this PPE equipment is not effective or being properly utilized and therefore making YOU liable for the damage it is causing.

This mitigation strategy makes NO COMMON SENSE!!! How can you sit there and morally substantiate placing government over reach and teacher's unions above our children's' well being?

In conclusion, it is our basic legal parental right to make medical decisions for our children. It is unlawful and dangerous for this school board and district to circumvent the LAW by not implementing informed consent and our right to choice. There are and will be legal consequences to circumventing these rights and following mandates that neither yourselves nor those imposing them have ANY formal, certifiable, medical education/training to do so.

This is MY CHILD, MY CHOICE!!! I have the right to informed consent and to choose what is medically appropriate for MY children.

Dawn

Good evening.

My name is Linda Blakesley, and I live at 27 Berry Avenue.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you.

My pronouns are she, her, and hers.

I want to welcome everyone back to school this year. In particular, I want to acknowledge, welcome, and give a special shout out to any transgender female or transgender male students. I have a special message for you. You are amazing! You are so special! The world needs you! We need you. Coventry needs you. You offer so much by way of talent, mind, and beauty. Please know that there are people in this community that love you and support you. I am one of those people. You have so much to offer this world, whatever it is you do. Be authentically you even when we fail at that out here. We are learning. You are so loved.

September is Suicide Awareness Prevention Month. According to NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Transgender people are 12x more likely to die by suicide than the general population.

I am wondering what kind of supports you have to support our transgender students. How do you celebrate them? Are there safe places established for them in the school?

This is just some data and questions to consider. I'd love to hear a report on this topic and answers to the questions I posed. It does not need to be today, but I hope that the Board will give this thoughtful consideration and get educated where they identify gaps in their knowledge.

Secondly, it is Hispanic American Heritage Month from September 15th to October 15th. I would love to hear how the district is celebrating this month and honoring and highlighting our staff and students who are Hispanic, Latino, Latina, or Latinx. This month offers a great opportunity to learn about other cultures and histories. I hope that Coventry is honoring our Hispanic and Latino brothers and sisters today, tomorrow, and beyond this month.

Lastly, I want to express my disappointment in the Coventry Board of Education for failing to recognize the pain and trauma that honoring Columbus Day causes for many, but especially indigenous students and parents. Many districts, including Manchester, have renamed the holiday, Indigenous People's Day. Doing so does not erase the violent past, but it is a step toward healing. I ask that the Board of Education immediately consider renaming Columbus Day as Indigenous People's Day.

That's all. Thank you for your time. Good night.

I'm here tonight, as both a teacher and a resident of Coventry, to speak in support of the continued school mask mandate. Aside from those people who are eligible for and *refusing* to get a covid vaccine, children who are *ineligible* for vaccination are a massive, viral breeding ground. The president of the American Academy of Pediatrics testified to Congress not long ago that pediatric COVID cases are increasing exponentially - they have seen "over a million new cases between August 5 and September 16." Last month, pediatric ICU beds in Dallas and 19 other counties surrounding Dallas were completely full. Zero beds were available for any child needing immediate intensive care. A Dallas County judge described the horror of the situation like this: Suppose your child is in a car accident, or has a serious congenital disorder that flares up, or, given Texas' refusal to mandate masking in schools (or anywhere, really), suppose your child is the one who develops a severe case of covid-19 and begins struggling to breathe... What can you do? There IS no room for them. They CANNOT get care. Your child would either have to wait for a child in a local ICU bed to die, or they would have to be transported to Oklahoma City for care - far away from family and friends.

When our children get sick, we take them to doctors and nurses and we ask for help because we know that they have spent YEARS studying the human body and understand how best to care for and heal the body when it is ill. The same people who angrily deride mask mandates and swear that their child is *actually* getting sick from breathing their own air while masked (which is not happening, because that's not how anything works) are the same ones to turn around and beg doctors and nurses to cure themselves and their children when they are ill - as would any one of us. If

we trust doctors when we are sick or our children are sick, then why are we not trusting them when we are healthy as well? Doctors and scientists all over the world are imploring EVERYONE to wear masks - adults and children alike - and especially to do so in schools.

I was able to get married last week and feel safe (nervously safe, but safe nonetheless) while doing so, because I knew that despite being in a full classroom of unvaccinated children for the past month, my chances of contracting covid were much lower due to the fact that all of my children wear masks, and wear them properly. They occasionally need reminders, but they are **all** absolutely fabulous about wearing masks, keeping them on, and doing so without a second thought. The only exceptions are two children with special needs, and they do sometimes need more frequent mask breaks than their peers, and we obviously provide them with those opportunities every single time they become necessary. I am thankful that Coventry continues to require masking.

Subject:

Emma Eaton OC statement from tonight

I think it's fair to say that all parents want our kids, and ourselves, to be able to resume daily routines that don't include the use of masks. I have listened to the statements made over the last several meetings wanting children to stop masking because of their lesser risk of death from Covid.

I'd like to ask parents and guardians to take a step back and consider all of the children in our district, and not solely the ones residing under their roofs.

The majority of students in the district are not yet eligible for vaccine. Many students have underlying conditions – things that put them at significantly higher risk should they contract Covid. Those students, all of them, have the same right to a free and appropriate education as students who had the good fortune to be born without any of those challenges. For privacy reasons many of these families choose not to speak at meetings like this. Their children's health is not public fodder. But please know that those families need mask mandates in place just to be able to send their child to school with a reasonable expectation of safety.

I look forward to the day when whatever the "new normal" is emerges, but we have not yet arrived there.

I'm thankful that the state level mask mandates will continue through winter to protect these young, often voiceless students.

Emma Eaton