

Coventry Board of Education
Coventry, Connecticut

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Approved Minutes of Thursday, August 31, 2023
Administration Building Conference Room

Members Present:

Jennifer Beausoleil, Chairperson
Eugene Marchand, Vice-Chairperson
Mary Kortmann, Secretary
Peter DePaola
Emma Eaton
Courtney Rossignol
Christina Williams

Administrator Present:

Dr. David J. Petrone, Superintendent of Schools

Audience: Dr. Lois Hasty, Preschool and Early Childhood Education Coordinator; Joseph Blake, CHS Principal; Senator Jeff Gordon; Dario Sarmiento Loayza, CHS Teacher; and several observers.

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

Joe Cleary, 545 Bunker Hill Road, thanked the teachers. He was present to speak about the transportation challenge, the teacher shortage, the condition of school facilities, and voiced his disappointment in how these situations have been handled by the Board.

Student, Addison Byam was present to speak about her disagreement with teachers asking students what their pronouns are, that she believes students should be saluting the American flag daily, and that it should be the only flag flown in the schools.

IV. Report of the Superintendent

IV.A. Recognition: Coventry Teacher of the Year 2024 - Dario Sarmiento Loayza with a special citation presentation by Senator Gordon

Dr. Petrone introduced Mr. Blake to publicly announce Dario Sarmiento-Loayza as Coventry's Teacher of the Year. Mr. Blake said a few words. Senator Jeff Gordon was in attendance and presented Mr. Sarmiento Loayza with a Citation. Mr. Sarmiento Loayza said

a few words of thanks. J. Beausoleil and E. Eaton both said a few words of appreciation. There were congratulations from the Board.

IV.B. Information: Hale Early Education Center Update

Dr. Petrone introduced Dr. Hasty, who shared an update on the Hale Early Education Center, which is available through the BoardBook portal on the district's website.

There were congratulations and appreciations from the Board.

IV.C. Information: Opening of the 2023-24 School Year

Dr. Petrone welcomed everyone back to the new school year. He reported on a few items in-district including a staffing update and shared an Opening of Schools video.

V. Report of the Chairman

J. Beausoleil reported on various items including Convocation, the new Town Manager, and that *U. S. News and World Best High Schools Ranking for 2023-2024* ranked Coventry at #42 in the State of Connecticut.

VII. VOTE: Approval of Minutes

VII.A. Approve Minutes of July 26, 2023

MOTION: To approve the minutes of July 26, 2023

By: E. Marchand

Seconded: C. Rossignol

Result: Motion passes unanimously

VIII. New Business

VIII.A. Possible VOTE: Use of Remote Learning on Two Inclement Weather Days

C. Rossignol advocated for kids being able to just have snow days and relayed issues she has heard surrounding these remote days. Dr. Petrone responded that the teachers have provided positive feedback.

C. Williams voiced her experience as a parent and that she felt the days were unproductive.

M. Kortmann relayed her experience as a grandparent and that their experience with these days was wonderful and productive.

E. Eaton agreed with M. Kortmann and said she has several grade levels at her house. She continued and expressed her support of those two days.

P. DePaola voiced his displeasure in having school ending on a Monday and would rather see other areas of the calendar adjusted.

MOTION: To authorize the Superintendent to allow for remote learning on up to two inclement weather days during the 2023-24 school year.

By: E. Marchand

Seconded: M. Kortmann

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

VIII.B. Discussion: Student Transportation

Dr. Petrone provided an update on the challenges the district is facing in regard to the looming bus drivers' strike.

The Board discussed the timing of the notice to parents and if it could have been sooner, the appreciation of the early open and late closing, the legalities surrounding the situation, and how to handle this if it becomes a long-term issue. Dr. Petrone indicated he could provide further details legally in Executive Session.

IX. Report of Board Members

IX.A. Information: Transportation Committee Report, Meeting of August 2, 2023

E. Marchand reported on the August 2 meeting, which included approval of the new routes, transportation guidelines for families, length of bus routes, and how well things were run last year with one less bus and the bus driver shortage.

C. Williams voiced her concern about the ridership across all buses and how uneven the numbers are. She said this remains a legitimate concern.

E. Marchand said they will continue to monitor this issue and the Committee will meet again in a couple of weeks.

IX.B. Information: Fiscal Committee Report, Meeting of August 31, 2023

M. Kortmann reported on the Fiscal Committee meeting held earlier in the evening.

IX.B.3. Information and Possible VOTE: DRAFT MOU Connecticut Electrical Vehicle Charging Stations Rebate Program

M. Kortmann reviewed the drafted MOU with the Town and said it would determine how the money is split and that the Board funds would flow to the Board.

There were concerns that the two schedules noted in the MOU were not attached.

It was agreed that the item would be tabled until the next meeting.

MOTION: To remove agenda item "Recess for Non-Meeting" and note that a "Reconvene" won't be necessary

By: C. Williams

Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: Motion passes unanimously

X. Possible VOTE: Executive Session (Discussion concerning an attorney-client privileged communication regarding transportation obligations)

MOTION: Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session for discussion concerning an attorney client privileged communication regarding transportation obligations with the Superintendent and attorney present at 9:16 p.m.

By: E. Eaton

Seconded: C. Williams

Result: Motion passes unanimously

XI. Open Session

The Board returned to Open Session at 9:58 p.m.

XII. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 9:59 p.m.

By: P. DePaola

Seconded: C. Rossignol

Result: Motion passes unanimously

Respectfully submitted:

Kimberlee Arey Delorme
Board Clerk

Approved: September 14, 2023