



Thursday, September 14, 2023
School Committee Meeting: 6:00 p.m.

Coventry Town Hall 1670 Flat River Road, Coventry, Rhode Island 02816

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Call to Order/Roll Call

Meeting called to order by Chairperson Pierson 6:07 p.m.

Roll Call Vote:	James Pierson, Chairperson	<u>aye</u>
	Ana Isabel dos Reis-Couto,	
	Vice-Chairperson	<u>aye</u>
	David Florio, Member	<u>aye</u>
	John Cambio, Jr., Member	<u>aye</u>
	Bradford Mayer, Member	<u>aye</u>
	Don Cowart	<u>aye</u>
	Christopher DeVerna	<u> </u>

Vote to Go into Executive Session

Motion No. 23-16-1 by Member dos Reis-Couto, seconded by Member Cambio that the Committee recess into Executive Session at 6:08 p.m. to consider matter(s) relating specifically to:

- Student Matters: R.I.G.L. §42-46-5 (a)(8) (Homeschool Requests)
- Approval of Executive Session Minutes 8/24/2023, the following items were discussed:
1.) Student Matters: R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a)(8) (Homeschool Requests), 2.) Approval of

Executive Session Minutes 8/10/2023, 3.) Litigation: R.I.G.L. §42-46-5 (a)(2)(Carlos v. Coventry);3.) Litigation: R.I.G.L. §42-46-5 (a)(2)(E.A. v. Coventry)

Motion passed 5/0.

Reconvene Open Session

The Open Meeting reconvened at 6:20 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence/Safety Notification/Reading of Mission Statement

Pledge of Allegiance

- *Moment of Silence to consider the work before the Committee this evening*
- *Safety Notifications -Superintendent Cowart notifies the public of emergency exits*
- *Member Mayer reads the Mission Statement: The mission of Coventry Public Schools is to inspire, support, and challenge all students in an inclusive community to be critical thinkers, effective communicators, reflective learners, responsible individuals, and global citizens.*

Vote to Seal Minutes of Executive Session

Motion No. 23-16-2 Member dos Reis-Couto, seconded by Member Mayer, that the records of the Executive Session be kept closed pursuant to Sections §42-46-4 and §42-46-5. Motion passed 5/0.

Executive Session Report

In executive session two votes were taken, the first to approve homeschool requests and the second to approve executive session minutes of 8/24/2023. Both motions passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes 8/24/2023

Motion No. 23-16-3 by Member Florio, seconded by Member Cambio, to approve the minutes of 8/24/2023 as presented. Motion passed 5/0.

Citizens Comments on Topics Listed on the Agenda

Chairperson Pierson explained that there will no longer be comments on each agenda item, but rather 2 times, once in the beginning and once at the end.

Letter to the Auditor General regarding FY 22 & 23 Budgets: Discussion and Vote

Mr. Cowart stated there is a deficit in 2022 and a potential deficit in 2023. The School Department has notified the Auditor General. The letter being sent is included in the packet. Mr. Deverna said this was discussed previously at a school committee meeting. He has had

verbal communication and received feedback from the Auditor General. The letter has also been shared with legal counsel. A draft was sent last week to the Auditor General, and feedback was requested. The school department didn't receive feedback. With approval of the school committee, the school department will send the letter to the Auditor General. Mr. Cowart will schedule a meeting with the Town and the Department of Education to fine tune a plan with the district. Chairperson Pierson opened for comments. Question and answer session followed.

Motion No. 23-16-4 Member dos Reis Couto, seconded by Member Florio, to approve the letter to the Auditor General regarding FY 22 & 23 Budgets. Motion passed 5/0.

Therapy Dog Presentation: Discussion

Mr. Cowart said two employees have purchased pets and are training them to be therapy dogs. Therapy dogs are to help support kids and adults. Lori Lebrun presented about therapy dogs in school. Lori thanked Mr. Lucian for being a big supporter of the program. Ms. Lebrun reviewed the reasons why the school department should have therapy programs to support the social and emotional needs of students. Chairperson Pierson opened for comments from the committee. Questions and session followed.

Therapy Dog Policy, First Reading: Discussion and Vote

Mr. Cowart said they looked at numerous policies and had Attorney Anderson review the policy. The policy subcommittee then fine-tuned the policy. Chairperson Pierson opened for comments from the committee. Questions and session followed.

Motion No. 23-16-5 Member Dos Reis-Couto, seconded by Member Mayer, to approve the first reading of the Therapy Dog Policy. Motion passed 5/0

Suicide Prevention Policy, Second Reading: Discussion and Vote

Mr. Cowart said this is the second reading and there were no changes. Chairperson Pierson opened for comments from the committee. There were no comments.

Motion No. 23-16-6 Member Mayer, seconded by Member Cambio, to approve the second reading of the Suicide Prevention Policy. Motion passed 5/0.

Approval of Skills USA Field Trip: Discussion and Vote

Mr. Cowart said this needs SC approval and that there is one student attending. Chairperson Pierson opened for comments from the committee. Questions and session followed.

Motion No. 23-16-7 Member dos Reis-Couto, seconded by Member Florio, to approve the Skills USA Field Trip to Washington D.C. Motion passed 5/0

CHS Auditorium Renovation Project: Discussion and Vote

Mr. Cowart said the hope is to get the project done in Dec or Jan. He stated they have the final quote. Carpet quote stayed the same. It will have a few seats less. There was a meeting in June to vote to use grant funds. The quote is above the two grant totals. He stated there is another source of funding. Mike Hobin started a fund account for seating for the auditorium which holds approximately \$57, 000. This gives the school department enough to cover the cost. Mr. Cowart asked permission to sign the quote so the carpet and furniture can be ordered. He stated the grants are included in the packet as well as the line number for Mike Hobin's funds. Chairperson Pierson opened for comments from the committee. Questions and session followed.

Motion No. 23-16-8 Member dos Reis-Couto, seconded by Member Mayer, to approve the CHS Auditorium Renovation Project. Motion passed 5/0.

SRP Pension Update: Discussion

Mr. DeVerna attended an SRP pension review meeting with the town manager, town finance director and Giel from Financial Synergies. They recommended adjusting asset allocation. The report is included in the school committee packets. The current audit is still ongoing and once it is complete, they will give an updated report. Mr. Cowart stated after the documents are reviewed further, they then can invite someone in to answer additional questions. Matthew Crawford, from Angel, has come in previously to speak on the pension report. Chairperson Pierson opened for comments. Questions and session followed.

Reforming of the Finance/Budget Subcommittee: Discussion

There was a discussion on reforming the finance/budget subcommittee and how to support and give feedback without hindering the process. Mr. Cowart said the process begins in December. He then explained how the budget process works, beginning with the needs of each principal and determining if the needs are necessary and can be met. Mr. Cowart recommended having the subcommittee as more of an advisory. When asked what the consensus was to have such a subcommittee, there was no response. Mr. Cowart suggested having a work session during a school committee meeting.

District Calendar Update and Approval: Discussion and Vote

Mr. Cowart provided the members with a letter notifying the school department that they were approved by the state. He also shared an updated calendar. He reviewed the changes. Chairperson Pierson opened for comments from the committee. Questions and session followed.

Motion No. 23-16-9 Member dos Reis-Couto, seconded by Member Florio, to approve the District Calendar as presented. Motion passed 5/0

Superintendent Report: 1.) School Building Committee Marketing Plan

Early voting for the bond has started and the actual vote is 10/3/2023. Mr. Cowart and Ms. Anzalone went to all the open houses at the different schools and presented information about the bond to the parents. Parents and staff were emailed information about the bond as well as posting it on social media. Chairperson Pierson opened for comments from the committee. Questions and session followed.

Citizens' Comments

Chris DeVerna said he was excited to announce that Ming You has started and that he is happy to have the help. He provided background information on Ming. Kelly Erinakes, CTA President, suggested adding release times to the calendar. Ms. Erinakes gave feedback on the condition of the buildings and things that need to be addressed and fixed. Mr. Cowart responded. Mr. Cambio verified with Mr. Cowart that Mr. Hill was aware of the issues. There was also a discussion on the cleaning of air vents.

Scheduling of the Next Meeting

Motion No. 23-16-10 by Member Mayer, and seconded by dos Reis-Couto, to schedule the next meeting for September 28, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. Motion passed 5/0

ADJOURNMENT

Motion No. 23-16-10 by Member Florio, and seconded by Member dos Reis-Couto, to adjourn at 7:38pm.

Motion passed 5/0