

Coventry Board of Education
Coventry, Connecticut

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Approved Minutes of Thursday, October 10, 2024
Administration Building Conference Room

Board Members Present:

Jennifer Beausoleil, Chairperson
Mary Kortmann, Secretary
Joseph Cleary
Emma Eaton
Courtney Rossignol
Christina Williams

Board Members Absent:

Eugene Marchand, Vice-Chairperson

Administrators Present:

Dr. David J. Petrone, Superintendent of Schools
Charmaine Bradshaw-Hill, Director of Finance and Operations

Also Present:

Lillian O'Neil, Student Board of Education Representative

I. Call to Order

J. Beausoleil called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. Salute to the Flag

J. Beausoleil led the salute to the flag.

III. Audience of Citizens

Linda Blakesley, 27 Berry Ave – she expressed concern about the school sign boards that communicated school break closure from 10/11-10/14. She felt the messaging was unclear and suggested that it should specifically mention Indigenous Peoples Day, rather than simply referring to an ambiguous school break. She requested that this topic be added to the next Board agenda for discussion.

IV. Report of the Superintendent

Dr. Petrone welcomed Charmaine Bradshaw-Hill as the new director of finance and operations. Dr. Petrone attended the New England Association of School Superintendents conference, where a security round table was held. Connecticut Grown for Kids visited GHR, allowing students to test a variety of samples. Today, the Performance Matters convention took place, featuring presentations from multiple staff members and students.

IV.A. Information: Board of Education Student Representative Report – Lillian O’Neil

Miss O’Neil announced that homecoming will be held on November 2nd and reminded everyone about the upcoming long weekend. She noted that juniors and sophomores will be taking the PSAT soon. The football team won their first game in two years. The Cross Country conference is approaching. On November 6th, the Charter Oak Music Festival will take place, hosted by Coventry.

IV.B. Recognition: Retired Coventry Band Teacher, Tony Susi (New CHS Fight Song)

Dr. Petrone recognized Tony Susi, for creating the new fight song for CHS.

Hannah Cole, the high school band director, expressed her gratitude for Mr. Susi’s contributions, highlighting his talent as a composer for orchestras and bands. She noted that the new fight song is now being played at games.

J. Beausoleil emphasized his significant role in the Coventry district as a teacher in the music program. She highlighted how he stepped in to support the community during a time of tragedy, helping to facilitate healing. She expressed gratitude for the connection the district has with him, recognizing his extraordinary contributions.

IV.C. Information: 2024 Assessment Results Summary (Driver: Deeper Thinking & Learning)

Dr. Petrone introduced administrators Ms. DeRagon, Mr. Blake, and Mr. Sward who presented the 2024 assessment results summary, which is available on the district’s website via the BoardBook portal.

The review of GHR and CNH SBAC ELA grade level achievement included analysis of the achievement rankings and relevant statistics.

The review of GHR and CNH SBAC Math grade level achievements included an analysis of the statistics and achievement rankings. Additionally, the Math Improvement Plan was discussed, outlining strategies for enhancing student performance and addressing areas in need of growth.

The review of NGSS science grade-level achievements included an analysis of the statistics and achievement rankings.

The review of SAT achievement included analysis of the statistics related to student performance. This overview highlighted key achievement metrics.

The review of Advanced Placement performance data.

Opportunities for growth were reviewed, focusing on identifying areas where the district can enhance student performance.

Noteworthy accomplishments were reviewed, highlighting significant achievements within the district.

J. Beausoleil remarked on the impressive AP enrollment numbers, emphasizing the district’s policy of allowing any student in good standing who expresses interest in an AP

class to enroll. She noted that these results reflect a strong feeder system and expressed appreciation for the genuine understanding of opportunities for growth within the district.

C. Williams commented on the remarkable 22% improvement in the Grade 7 cohort, praising this achievement as an outstanding accomplishment.

J. Cleary shared his observations about his child who had struggled with math due to setbacks from COVID. He expressed that the improvements he has seen have been incredible.

M. Kortmann thanked the administrators for listening to Board feedback on student performance.

E. Eaton remarked on the impressive jump in the 7th-grade cohort performance, noting how tonight's presentation was laid out nicely. She appreciated that it balanced the discussion of achievements with areas for growth, highlighting the visible focus on continuous improvement within the district.

C. Rossignol expressed appreciation for the cohort breakdown, noting that the Math cohort from 22-24 did not meet expectations, which caught her attention. She acknowledged the system in place to address the gap.

Dr. Petrone provided information on the AP credit count, highlighting the monetary savings for students pursuing college.

Mr. Blake noted that out of the 857 students, 182 juniors and seniors were eligible for college credits. He highlighted that 71% of seniors had earned at least one college credit, along with 61% of juniors. The Board requested that this information be included in future presentations.

V. Report of the Chairman

J. Beausoleil welcomed the new director of finance and operations, Charmaine. She reported that Hale and CGS conducted fire prevention activities. She attended a CABE webinar focused on school threat communication, FERPA, and related topics, which featured Deputy Commissioner and attorneys. Additionally, she participated in school finance webinars that coached boards on utilizing 2% accounts. She expressed her admiration for the high school students during mock interviews, noting their impressive performance.

VI. Communications

There were none.

VII. VOTE: Approval of Minutes

VII.A. Approve Minutes Special Meeting September 26, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.

MOTION: To approve the special minutes of September 26, 2024

By: E. Eaton

Seconded: C. Williams

Result: Motion carries unanimously

VII.B. Approve Minutes Special Meeting September 26, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.

MOTION: To approve the special minutes of September 26, 2024

By: C. Rossignol

Seconded: E. Eaton

Result: Motion carries unanimously

VII.C. Approve Minutes Regular Meeting September 26, 2024 – 8:00 p.m.

Edits: agenda item VIII.A, sentence 8, change ‘the group’ to ‘the committee’, sentence 12 make new paragraph, starting with ‘Naming the weight room’

MOTION: To approve the minutes of September 26, 2024, as amended

By: C. Rossignol

Seconded: E. Eaton

Result: Motion carries unanimously

VIII. New Business

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

Dr. Petrone reviewed the remote learning snow days survey results, highlighting that having a solid plan in place is beneficial in the event of a catastrophic incident. He discussed that he would restructure the remote day differently by refining the approach to daily activities, emphasizing the importance of clear expectations regarding time management and lesson structure.

C. Rossignol suggested that it would be beneficial to have a clearer picture regarding the survey, specifically with two data sets, K-5 and 6-12. She expressed concern that K-5 students are heavily reliant on their parents, which could place a burden on families. Dr. Petrone clarified that remote days would involve an abbreviated school day and explained what could be accomplished during that time. C. Rossignol also raised concerns about the inequity of requiring a specific subset of staff to compensate for lost learning days. Dr. Petrone responded that this subset is technically not part of the school structure, noting that their schedule and demands differ.

M. Kortmann shared her perspective that her grandson in kindergarten enjoyed remote learning. She emphasized the importance of having the flexibility to incorporate remote learning days.

C. Williams expressed her concern that remote learning days might not be as effective. However, she acknowledged that this could be a consideration if snow days were to affect the April vacation. She proposed implementing three snow days before resorting to remote learning days. Dr. Petrone noted that if additional days were added due to snow, there’s a risk that students may become disengaged toward the end of the year.

J. Cleary inquired whether students would receive instruction on how remote days would be conducted. Dr. Petrone confirmed that pending board approval, students would be instructed on the remote learning process. J. Cleary also asked if there has been any research on the effectiveness of remote snow days. Dr. Petrone responded that he would need to look into that but noted that attendance on remote days has historically been high.

E. Eaton pointed out that many families she has spoken with have begun to rely on remote snow days for planning vacations. She noted that having remote days provides a buffer, helping to avoid extending the school year.

MOTION: To authorize the Superintendent to allow for remote learning on up to two inclement weather days during the 2024-25 school year

By: E. Eaton

Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: 4-1-1 (M. Kortmann, E. Eaton, J. Cleary, J. Beausoleil in favor)

(C. Rossignol opposing)

(C. Williams abstaining)

Motion Carries

IX. Report of Board Members

IX.A. Information: District Wellness Committee Liaison Report, Meeting of October 3, 2024 – C. Rossignol

C. Rossignol reported that the committee met last week to review the UCONN-developed wellness scoring. They are currently working on revising the policy to meet the necessary requirements. The next meetings are scheduled for November 7th and December 5th.

IX.B. Information: Fiscal Committee Report, Meeting of October 10, 2024 – M. Kortmann

M. Kortmann reported that there hasn't been much change to the budget balance, noting that the district is still facing challenges with special education outplacement and temporary salaries. She mentioned that the committee has begun reviewing the capital budget for next year, with the first draft available in the board attachments. She asked the board to review it, as it will be presented for approval at an upcoming meeting before being forwarded to the town manager for presentation to the town council. She encouraged any recommendations to be sent to Jen, Mary, or Dr. Petrone, noting that it needs to be submitted to the town manager after the board's November meeting.

C. Williams inquired about the request for multiple maintenance vehicles. Dr. Petrone clarified the distinct needs that each vehicle addresses.

The board discussed priority items and their associated costs, considering how the town council may proceed with these requests. They also addressed the use of additional funds available, emphasizing the importance of being judicious in their allocation and usage.

The board discussed the fire alarm and PA systems at CGS and GHR, questioning whether the fire alarm system is the same type that was replaced under a previous bond. Dr. Petrone acknowledged that he didn't have the specific answer but confirmed that both the fire alarm system and the PA system are original to the buildings.

The board discussed security issues, seeking confirmation on full coverage at schools. Dr. Petrone explained that while there is full coverage, some cameras are outdated. He also highlighted that all camera feeds go directly to the police station and police vehicles, enhancing overall security coordination.

The board asked for clarification on the fire pump replacement and reviewed the condition of the exterior doors at CGS.

C. Rossignol recognized that while the town owns the school buildings, the school district is tasked with their maintenance. She expressed concern about when the responsibility would shift back to the town if systems were to ultimately fail. J. Beausoleil responded by stating that the town is not being negligent, but highlighted the difficulty of approving significant expenditures when budgets fail to pass, noting the challenging balance between community needs and taxpayer approval.

C. Williams raised a question about alternative behavior programs, noting that the Coventry Academy has reached its maximum capacity and asking whether the growing demands in the district need to be addressed. Dr. Petrone acknowledged the challenge, emphasizing that the main issue is securing enough students to support an additional class.

There was a discussion regarding the 2% account and the voiding of the memorandum of understanding, which required that items be included in the capital improvement plan to access the 2% fund for funding.

X. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 8:52 p.m.

By: C. Williams

Seconded: M. Kortmann

Result: Motion carries unanimously

Respectfully Submitted:

Tricia Dean
Board Clerk

Approved: October 30, 2024