

Coventry Board of Education
Coventry, Connecticut

Board of Education Regular Meeting
Approved Minutes of Thursday, February 13, 2025
Administration Building Conference Room

Board Members Present:

Jennifer Beausoleil, Chairperson
Eugene Marchand, Vice Chairperson
Mary Kortmann, Secretary
Joseph Cleary (via zoom)
Emma Eaton
Courtney Rossignol
Christina Williams

Board Members Absent:

None

Administrators Present:

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

I. Call to Order

J. Beausoleil called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Salute to the Flag

J. Beausoleil led the salute to the flag.

III. Audience of Citizens

There were none

J. Beausoleil asked to add a vote to the agenda to allow for last-minute emergency remote attendance by a Board member. She explained that the current Board policy, along with state laws, requires two days' notice for a Board member to participate remotely. However, she noted that this was a last-minute need and request, and tonight's budget vote is crucial for Board participation.

MOTION: Approve to add a vote to the agenda to allow for an emergency remote attendance by a Board member

By: E. Marchand

Seconded: C. Williams

Result: Motion carries unanimously

MOTION: To approve waiving, for one day, the requirement in policy 9368 for a Board member to provide two business days' notice of the intent to participate by means of electronic equipment.

By: C. Rossignol

Seconded: E. Eaton

Result: Motion carries unanimously

IV. Report of the Superintendent

Dr. Petrone provided several updates for the month, including celebrating the Chinese New Year at the middle school. On Tuesday, he participated in Think Tank hosted by the CT Center for Education Research and Collaboration, which focused on collecting data for regulating cost of outplacement. He also mentioned the busy weather patterns that are currently ongoing and expected in the near future.

E. Marchand stated that last Tuesday night, the girl's middle school basketball team competed in the state championship and won. He commended Ross and his team for their accomplishment. Additionally, he noted that the girls won the NCCC Tournament for the first time.

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

There was no report.

IV.B. Information: Increasing Enrichment through Technology (Authentic Work) – Mr. Spivey

Mr. Spivey presented the Student IT program, which is available on the district's website via the BoardBook portal. Students shared their roles and experiences in the program, highlighting what they learned and how they contributed to its success.

J. Beausoleil commended the students for participating in the program and learning this important tool.

E. Eaton expressed appreciation for the technical skills the students gain, noting that the confidence they develop through the program is also invaluable.

Mr. Spivey stated that he assured students and parents that they would find a way to continue fostering this program.

V. Report of the Chairman

J. Beausoleil reported that the Chinese New Year ceremony and performance were great. She also mentioned the quarterly joint subcommittee meeting for the town and fiscal committee had good conversation. Regarding the governor's proposed budget, she noted that it isn't as favorable to education as they had hoped and encouraged community members to advocate. She reminded Board members that no other devices can be used that are not visible to the public during this meeting.

VI. Communications

Senator Gordon's communication was received and will be included in the budget agenda item discussion.

VII. VOTE: Approval of Minutes

VII.A. Approve Minutes of January 30, 2025

MOTION: To approve the Minutes of January 30, 2025

By: C. Rossignol

Seconded: E. Eaton

Result: Motion carries, with one abstention by E. Marchand

VIII. Report of Board Members

VIII. A. Fiscal Committee Report, Meeting of February 13, 2025 – M. Kortmann and Ms. Bradshaw-Hill

M. Kortmann stated that progress continues to be made towards a positive outlook for the year, although the district is still in a deficit.

IX. Old Business

IX.A. Discussion and Possible VOTE: FY2026 Budget

Dr. Petrone updated the Board from the last meeting regarding the addition of a security position. He reviewed the location, schedule, and salary for the role, explaining that this position would handle residency investigations. This position would serve the K-5 schools. Additionally, the person in this role would receive specialized training that our current security liaison participates in. Dr. Petrone conducted research on other districts and confirmed that the proposed salary is within the typical range for similar positions.

There was discussion about whether the officer would carry a weapon, noting that this decision would fall under the Board's purview. Additionally, the location where the security person would be housed was discussed. Dr. Petrone clarified that there would not be a set schedule for the security person's placement, allowing for flexibility based on needs.

The current security liaison would serve as the supervisor for the new security position. There was a discussion about increasing the current security liaison's salary to reflect the additional supervisory responsibilities. Including this new position in the budget would result in an overall budget increase of 5.38%.

J. Beausoleil stated that the current security liaison did not request this initiative, so it falls under the category of a "want" rather than a "need."

J. Cleary expressed his sentiments that the proposed budget does not include new initiatives. He emphasized that safety is a significant initiative, one that he believes the Board and parents would support.

E. Marchand expressed that there is nothing definitive to show that having extra security on campus would make it safer. While he acknowledged it as a nice goal, he stated that he would be hard-pressed to approve an increase the budget.

E. Eaton stated that it's important to communicate to the community that this security position would be one piece of a much larger security plan. She emphasized that the district is already taking security seriously in several ways. She also pointed out that this year's budget is significantly higher than what has historically been proposed. If the current security person had approached Dr. Petrone and requested this as a necessity, she would have looked for ways to support the request.

C. Rossignol noted that there are significant special education costs in the budget, but emphasized the need to also focus on protecting general education students in the same way. She expressed a desire to go through the budget discussions more thoroughly and revisit the matter.

J. Beausoleil stated that if the Board wanted to enhance the security plan, more thoughtful consideration should be given for the future, rather than adding to the budget last minute.

C. Williams responded that this was brought up at the last meeting, so it is not a last-minute addition.

C. Williams expressed that this is an initiative the Board should support for the safety of all schools. She mentioned that she is unsure if she can support a budget that does not include this security position. While the district has been fortunate with grant funding for security, she noted that those grants are going away. She emphasized that the Board must figure out how to protect the schools for the worst-case scenario.

J. Beausoleil responded that the grants were one-time funding, and since then, the budget for security has been increased, with the additional costs being covered by taxpayers rather than grants.

Dr. Petrone reviewed the increase in facilities costs and mentioned a retirement announcement, which would bring some savings. The late bus for the middle school and high school was also discussed. It was noted that eliminating the late bus wouldn't result in significant cost savings.

There was a consensus to remove the late bus from the budget.

There was a consensus to move the wrestling mats out of the operating budget for \$10,200.

The specific account to move it into will be discussed at a future meeting. J. Cleary mentioned that he has some cost-saving information on the wrestling mats, which he will send to Dr. Petrone.

J. Beausoleil spoke about the restoration of funding for middle school sports and the restoration of subsidies for the intramural program. Her recommendation was not to restore the intramural subsidy for parents. Dr. Petrone reviewed the financial assistance currently available to families.

It was confirmed that removing the intramurals subsidy impacted the participation rate. However, Dr. Petrone noted that the overall program offerings had declined. C. Williams expressed her belief that intramurals are important at the middle school age.

C. Rossignol suggested exploring the possibility of keeping intramurals while removing the grade 4 band, noting that historically, band has not been available until grade 5. There was

a discussion on this, and E. Eaton shared her perspective on the importance and advantages of starting band in 4th grade.

There was consensus on removing the .2 addition for 4th grade band.

C. Bradshaw-Hill provided an update on health insurance, noting significant increases for both the town and district. She mentioned that a meeting with the consultants is scheduled for February 25th. The current projection for the budget is a 9% increase, which she feels is a comfortable estimate. J. Beausoleil explained that it's typical not to have a clarified number in February.

There was a discussion on grant funding for the current year and its stability. Dr. Petrone confirmed that, as of right now, the funding is stable through June. The conversation also touched on how the removal of any future grant funding could impact the budget.

The topic of merging services with the town was discussed. Dr. Petrone mentioned that IT services have been a point of discussion, and a draft proposal has been sent to the town.

There was NOT a consensus to add a security person.

C. Williams noted for the record that she is in favor of adding a security person.

MOTION: Approve the FY2026 Budget at \$32,285,374 a 5.09% increase over the current year budget

By: E. Marchand

Seconded: M. Kortmann

Discussion. C. Rossignol expressed that she doesn't think the proposed budget will pass. The conversation turned to what a reasonable number for cuts would be and if there were other areas to consider for reductions. E. Marchand pointed out that this is a maintenance budget, with no new additions. C. Williams stated she would support the budget if there was support for the additional security person and if the proposal was attached to the proposed budget to be sent to the town. There was further discussion on the matter, and although there was not full agreement to support this idea, J. Beausoleil confirmed that she would bring it up during discussions with the town.

Result: Motion passes, with one opposition by C. Rossignol

X. New Business

X.A. Discussion and Possible VOTE: Approve the 2025-2026 School Calendar

Dr. Petrone reviewed the proposed calendar, noting that conferences have been adjusted to take place after report cards are distributed. He asked the Board to consider adding additional professional development days for the Wit & Wisdom program for one year only for K-5, either as a half day or a 2-hour delay. He mentioned that this calendar aligns with EASTCONN's calendar.

The calendar for November, with numerous days off, was discussed. Dr. Petrone also addressed the request for a full day in session on December 23rd, explaining that parents appreciate the half day off and that most districts have it as a half day. There was discussion on the placement of professional development days and the reasoning behind when they are scheduled. The CGS open house date was discussed, with consideration to

moving it earlier. Dr. Petrone explained the reasoning for the current open house schedule. The yellow box dates for potential professional development for K-5 only were discussed, along with alternate dates to consider. Conference dates were also reviewed.

There was consensus to support the addition of professional development days for the Wit & Wisdom program for K-5 only, for one year only. Additionally, there was consensus to designate 9/26, 10/31, and 2/13 as professional development days for K-5 only.

There was consensus to have school in session on Nov 4th, Election Day.

MOTION: Approve the 2025-2026 school calendar, with the addition of professional development days for K-5 on 9/26/25, 10/31/25, and 2/13/26, and to have school in session on November 4, 2025

By: J. Cleary

Seconded: E. Eaton

Result: Motion passes unanimously

X.B. Discussion: Review of Policy Revisions (to be warned for a vote at a future meeting.)

- 1. 4116.2 Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment – Workplace**
- 2. 4130 Social Media**
- 3. 5125 Confidentiality and Access to Education Records (FERPA)**
- 4. 5131 Title IX Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment**
- 5. 5131.2 Student Use of the District’s Computer Systems Internet Safety**
- 6. 5131.4 Use of Private Technological Devices by Students**
- 7. 6146.1 Weighted Grading and Calculation of Grade Point Averages**

TABLED UNTIL NEXT MEETING

XI. Report of Board Members

XI.A. Evaluation and Projection Committee Report, Meeting of February 10, 2025

J. Beausoleil explained that this committee was formed long ago and that they have now resumed its use. The committee will gather feedback and make decisions on initial planning, and will also review information from the previous committee.

XI.B. Joint Transportation Committee / Fiscal Committee Report, Meeting of February 13, 2025

J. Beausoleil reported that they discussed the RFP draft for special education transportation. She reviewed the process that, after the RFP goes out, the transportation committee will work on selecting an appropriate vendor.

XII. Possible VOTE: Executive Session (bargaining unit negotiations)

There was none.

XIII. Open Session

There was none.

XIV. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 10:20 p.m.

By: C. Rossignol

Seconded: E. Eaton

Result: Motion carries unanimously

Respectfully Submitted:

Tricia Dean
Board Clerk

Approved: February 27, 2025