

**Coventry Board of Education**  
Coventry, Connecticut

**Board of Education Regular Meeting**  
Approved Minutes of Thursday, April 10, 2025  
Administration Building Conference Room

Board Members Present:

Jennifer Beausoleil, Chairperson  
Eugene Marchand, Vice-Chairperson  
Mary Kortmann, Secretary  
Joseph Cleary  
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

Also Present:

Lillian O'Neil, Student Board of Education Representative

**I. Call to Order**

J. Beausoleil called the meeting to order at 8:03 p.m.

**II. Salute to the Flag**

J. Beausoleil led the salute to the flag.

**III. Audience of Citizens**

There were none.

**IV. Report of the Superintendent**

Dr. Petrone shared several updates for the month. He attended the Hockanum Valley superintendents meeting, reported that STEAM night was a great success, and participated in the Tri-M induction ceremony and concert. Student focus groups were held this week, and the Bob Plaster dedication ceremony took place. The Cell Phone Use Task Force Committee also convened. However, the Early Education Advisory Committee meeting with CAPSS was cancelled.

G. Marchand commented that the Bob Plaster dedication was very well done and served as a powerful reminder of the lasting impact teachers and coaches have on students' lives.

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

Miss O'Neil provided several updates, including that juniors recently took the PSAT and preparations are underway for AP testing. Tenth-grade students are participating in the AP Seminar program. April break is coming up. The band and chorus are preparing for their trip to Virginia, where they will represent Coventry. She also noted that the Tri-M National Honor Society induction ceremony was recently held.

## **V. Report of the Chairman**

J. Beausoleil highlighted several recent and upcoming events. She noted the success of STEAM Night and the Robert Plaster dedication ceremony. Spring events are beginning to take shape, including informational sessions related to student transitions in grades 3, 6, and 9. She acknowledged the many organizations that support Coventry students and emphasized the need for community volunteers. This includes the PTO, which is currently seeking new officers, and the Coventry Scholarship Foundation, which provides thousands of dollars in scholarships and is also looking for volunteers. She also shared that the Cell Phone Task Force has been a valuable opportunity to engage with parents, staff, and board members in meaningful conversations. The input gathered will help inform the Board of the potential development of a future policy.

## **VI. Communications**

There were none.

## **VII. VOTE: Approval of Minutes**

### **VII.A. Approve Minutes of March 27, 2025**

Edits: agenda item III, correct last name for Peter to DePaola, and agenda item IV, correct 'CSA' to 'CGS'

**MOTION: To approve the Minutes of March 27, 2025, as amended**

**By: C. Williams**

**Seconded: E. Marchand**

**Result: Motion carries unanimously**

## **VIII. Report of Board Members**

### **VIII.A. Information: Fiscal Committee Report, Meeting of April 10, 2025 – M. Kortmann and Ms. Bradshaw-Hill**

M. Kortmann reported that the district is in the black, but by a narrow margin of \$33,000, and emphasized the need to closely monitor the preschool budget. J. Beausoleil gave a shout-out to Charmaine and her team for creating reconciliation reports while awaiting town hall staff to stabilize and get up to speed. J. Beausoleil also provided an update on food services, noting that meal prices and costs are a concern. While food services are typically not a money-making operation, many programs during COVID provided meal reimbursements, which allowed for some profit. However, that reimbursement funding is no longer available this year. It's important to note that the usual practice of breaking even or losing money may continue. This is something to keep in mind for next year, particularly regarding how to cover those expenses.

## **IX. Old Business**

### **IX. A. Discussion and Possible VOTE: FY2026 Budget**



M. Kortmann inquired whether the keyboarding program was being eliminated. Dr. Petrone confirmed that it is not; the district is simply switching to different software.

C. Williams reviewed the list of potential cuts and pointed out that Hale Early Education Center had not been impacted by any of the proposed cuts. She suggested reconsidering the 60/40 cost-sharing model and instead using the actual student population to determine the financial split. She proposed that Hale operate as a standalone program and that more of the cost be shifted to participating families.

Dr. Petrone responded that for special education students, guidelines stipulate that no more than 50% of a classroom should consist of students with special needs. To maintain this balance, the district needs to ensure the correct ratio of mentor students to special education students. The structure is designed so that special education students are supported through the district's operating budget. He also reviewed the sliding scale tuition model and noted that Smart Start grant funding has helped offset some of the costs. The district has intentionally built up reserves to help sustain the program once the grant expires. He emphasized that the district only pays for services mandated by a student's IEP and only for the time those services are required. If parents choose for their child to attend for a full day, they are responsible for covering the additional hours. Taxpayers are not funding beyond what is legally obligated. Dr. Petrone clarified that the 60/40 split refers specifically to maintenance and repairs, and he reviewed what is included in that calculation.

C. Rossignol suggested exploring the option of moving one special education teacher from the operating budget.

**MOTION: To move the Preschool and Early Childhood Education Coordinator's salary out of the operating budget into the preschool budget.**

**By: C. Williams**

**Seconded: J. Cleary**

**Result: C. Rossignol, C. Williams, J. Cleary in favor, with J. Beausoleil, M. Kortmann, E. Eaton, E. Marchand opposing. MOTION FAILS**

C. Williams raised concerns about inefficiencies in the current bus routing and suggested that the district should challenge DATTCO to eliminate one bus and optimize the remaining routes. E. Eaton responded by noting the district is currently operating 17 buses, which is still three fewer than what DATTCO recommends for running proper and efficient routes. She explained how the bus routes are structured and stated that the district has thoroughly reviewed the possibility of consolidation. However, current routes cannot be further combined without exceeding the 60-minute ride time threshold. She believes the current routing is the most efficient configuration possible under the circumstances. It was also noted that both the bus capacity and ride time were key factors in determining the current routes. Further discussion followed on the feasibility of consolidating bus routes in the future.

**MOTION: Move to have the transportation subcommittee direct DATTCO to develop a 16- bus route plan**

**By: C. Williams**

**Seconded:**

**Amendment: move to amend the motion to have the transportation subcommittee request that DATTCO run a 16-bus route scenario when the transportation committee meets with DATTCO for their summer meeting.**

**By: E. Marchand**

**Seconded: C. Rossignol**

### **Result: Motion passes unanimously**

C. Williams shared her concerns regarding the use of one-to-one devices for students in grades K-2, stating that screen time can negatively impact social-emotional development and that students at this age do not need individual devices. Dr. Petrone responded by noting that K-2 students do not take devices home, but removing the one-to-one model would make remote learning days difficult to implement under the current structure. A shift away from Chromebooks would require a completely different approach. J. Beausoleil added that moving back to paper-based instruction would involve significant curriculum development costs. C. Williams suggested an alternative approach in which students could use shared devices in groups and rotate during class time. E. Eaton offered a different perspective, stating that having individual devices at an early age helps build a sense of responsibility and supports foundational skills.

C. Williams requested that it be noted for the record that the alternative reduction options she has proposed – regarding Hale, bussing, and Chromebooks - would preserve current staffing levels.

C. Rossignol suggested that, in order to preserve current staff positions and programming, the district consider eliminating positions that are not currently filled. Dr. Petrone responded that staffing needs are based on actual IEP service hours. C. Rossignol sought confirmation that the proposed reductions would include the following positions: library media specialist, social studies teacher, Chinese teacher, CEP teacher, guidance counselor, and guidance counselor secretary. Dr. Petrone confirmed this list.

The technology programs were reviewed, and it was noted that although the updated program has more limited functionality, it still meets the district's needs.

**MOTION: To approve the recommended reductions from the provided list, with the exception of the following positions and items: the K-5 Library Media Specialist, the Middle School CEP position, one School Counselor position, and the restoration of \$4,000 for Middle School Athletics.**

**By: E. Eaton**

**Seconded: E. Marchand**

There was a discussion regarding the Hale tuition funds. It was noted that reassigning one teacher from the Hale budget to another funding source would result in a savings of \$153,000. C. Williams and C. Rossignol expressed concern and disappointment that this option was not prioritized, and instead, reductions to other staff positions were being considered.

There was a discussion regarding proposals made to the town and potential partnerships that were not utilized to share costs. J. Beausoleil reviewed Dr. Petrone's proposal to the town for shared IT services and the perception conveyed by the Town Manager. It was noted that the proposal did not reach the Town Council, as the decision was made by the Town Manager and staff. E. Marchand shared his perspective on the reasoning behind the proposed reductions, stating that while none of the cuts are desirable, the intent was to minimize the overall impact. C. Williams expressed that the infighting and disagreement within the Democratic Party was the reason shared services did not proceed. A point of order was raised by E. Marchand. J. Beausoleil clarified that no member of the Republican Party had proposed the shared services idea and emphasized that this issue should not be solely attributed to the Democrats.

The total budget reductions resulting from the motion amounted to \$765,801.

**MOTION Amendment: To approve the recommended reductions from the provided list, with the exception of the following positions and items: the K-5 Library Media Specialist, the Middle School CEP position, one School Counselor position, and the restoration of \$4,480 for Middle School Athletics.**

**By: E. Eaton**

**Seconded: E. Marchand**

**Result: J. Beausoleil, M. Kortmann, E. Eaton, E. Marchand in favor, with C. Williams, J. Cleary, C. Rossignol opposing. Motion carries**

**X. Possible VOTE: Executive Session (Superintendent's Evaluation)**

**MOTION: Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session for discussion related to superintendent's evaluation at 10:17 p.m.**

**By: C. Williams**

**Seconded: E. Eaton**

**Result: Motion carries unanimously**

C. Williams left Executive Session.

**XI. Open Session**

The Board of Education returned to Open Session at 10:48 p.m.

**XII. Adjournment**

**MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 10:49 p.m.**

**By: E. Eaton**

**Seconded: C. Rossignol**

**Result: Motion carries unanimously**

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Respectfully Submitted:

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Tricia Dean  
Board Clerk

Approved: April 24, 2025