

SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING  
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION OFFICES  
1675 FLAT RIVER ROAD

December 15, 2009

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Patenaude at 6:01 p.m.

Members present: Chairperson Katherine Patenaude, Vice-Chairman Andrew 'Ben' Perra and Member Thomas Hetherman, Superintendent Kenneth R. Di Pietro, Assistant Superintendents Michael Convery and James Erinakes, and Finance Director Robin Reasor. Member Lisa Tomasso arrived at 7:00 p.m.

Recording Secretary: Donna A. McDonald (not present)

Executive Session: Personnel, Litigation, Negotiation, Student Appeal

Motion No. 09-12-1 by Vice-Chairman Perra, seconded by Member Hetherman, that the Committee recess into executive session at 6:04 p.m. to consider matter(s) relating specifically to personnel, litigation, negotiation and student appeal; said action being taken in accord with Open Meetings Act, Sections 42-46-5(a)(1)&(2).

<u>Roll Call Vote:</u>	Chairperson Patenaude	<u>AYE</u>
	Vice-Chairman Perra	<u>AYE</u>
	Member Hetherman	<u>AYE</u>

Motion No. 09-12-2 by Vice-Chairman Perra, seconded by Member Hetherman, to recess to the Open Meeting.

<u>Roll Call Vote:</u>	Chairperson Patenaude	<u>AYE</u>
	Vice-Chairman Perra	<u>AYE</u>
	Member Hetherman	<u>AYE</u>

Motion No. 09-12-3 by Vice-Chairman Perra, seconded by Member Hetherman, that the records of the executive session be kept closed pursuant to Sections 42-46-4 and 42-46-5. Motion unanimously approved.

Business Agenda:

The regular business meeting reconvened at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence for the pending school business. Vice-Chairman Perra notified the public of emergency exits and Member Hetherman read the Mission Statement.

Consent Agenda:

Minutes of the Open Meetings of 10/27/09 and 11/10/09.

Superintendent approval of eight (8) requests for home schooling for the 2009/2010 school year as reviewed and recommended by Assistant Superintendent Convery.

Superintendent approval of a paid leave of absence for Meghan Smith, Art Teacher for the District, from approximately 12/6/09 to 1/28/10. (maternity)

Superintendent approval of a paid leave of absence for Michelle Coen, Reading Teacher at Tiogue School, from approximately 4/22/10 to 6/8/10. (maternity)

Bills, Warrants, Payroll: In the amount of \$5,998,929.05 for the month of October, 2009.

Monthly Municipal Reports: In the amount of \$65,936,827 as of the month of October, 2009.

Bills, Warrants, Payroll: In the amount of \$4,949,331.16 for the month of November, 2009.

Monthly Municipal Reports: In the amount of \$65,936,827 as of the month of November, 2009.

Motion No. 09-12-4, by Vice-Chairperson Perra, seconded by Member Hetherman, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented regarding the minutes of the open meetings of 10/27/09 and 11/10/09, home schooling, leaves of absence, and fiscal reports as presented/amended. Motion unanimously approved.

Approval of Executive Session Minutes:

Motion No. 09-12-5 by Member Tomasso, seconded by Member Hetherman, to affirm the minutes of the executive session of 11/10/09 and that the records of the meeting be kept closed pursuant to R.I.G.L. Sections 42-46-4 and 42-46-5. Motion unanimously approved.

Personnel:

Certified Resignation/Retirement:

Motion No. 09-12-6 by Vice-Chairman Perra, seconded by Member Tomasso, to approve the recommendation of the Superintendent to accept the resignation of Michelle Matzko, Speech/Language Pathologist for ULSS, effective 12/22/09. Motion unanimously approved.

Certified Appointment:

Motion No. 09-12-7 by Member Hetherman, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Perra, to affirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to appoint DeAnna Cotoia to the position of Temporary .5 Pre-School Teacher at Hopkins Hill School effective 12/15/09 for the remainder of the 2009/2010 school year. Motion unanimously approved.

Coaching Appointments:

Motion No. 09-12-8 by Member Tomasso, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Perra, to affirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to appoint Carlton Bradshaw to the position of Head Boys' Indoor Track Coach at CHS for the 2009/2010 season. Motion unanimously approved.

Motion No. 09-12-9 by Vice-Chairperson Perra, seconded by Member Hetherman, to affirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to appoint Kimberly Perschau to the position of Head Girls' Indoor Track Coach at CHS for the 2009/2010 season. Motion unanimously approved.

Motion No. 09-12-10 by Member Hetherman, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Perra, to affirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to appoint Donna Beaudoin to the position of Assistant Girls' Basketball Coach at CHS for the 2009/2010 season. Motion unanimously approved.

Classified Termination:

Motion No. 09-12-11 by Vice-Chairperson Perra, seconded by Member Hetherman, to affirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to terminate the services of Bruce Alexander, 2<sup>nd</sup> Shift Custodian at Feinstein Middle School, effective 12/15/09. Motion unanimously approved.

School Committee Communications:

Ken explained SRTS.

### Cell Tower Proposals:

The Committee was presented with a request from the Town Manager to authorize the installation of two cell towers on Hopkins Hill school property and Coventry High school property. This lease would provide additional revenues to the district. A similar cell tower at Blackrock Elementary School was authorized and provides approximately \$20,000 annually of non-property tax revenue for the term of the lease agreement.

This new proposal would establish two new cell towers under the ownership of the Town but managed by a company. The revenue from the cell towers when constructed would include a lease for \$800/month for \$9,600 per year per site. This reduced revenue is designed as a cost offset to the company's construction and management of the cell tower. The tower will be designed to allow for up to two other uni-directional cells (4 cells N/S/E/W) for lease with a projected monthly lease rate of \$2,000 per month. If each tower is fully leased, the additional revenue approximates \$48,000 per year per site. The Town indicated that there has been expressed interest by other vendors to lease cell tower access at the sites proposed. Mr. Steverman has reviewed the sites proposed and confirms that the proposed sites do not interfere with the use or need for the property for school-related activities. This new approach to cell towers retains the property ownership with the Town and only the cells and the tower management are the responsibility of the vendor for which the monthly lease rate is lower. The Town saves the cost (defers to the vendor) the site construction while potentially earning over \$50,000 per year per site.

The first issue on this matter was that the School Committee took action in 2008 to approve the lease of property at Coventry High to Omnipoint for the construction of a cell tower and subsequently took action to lease property at Washington Oak. The first action was to rescind the decision to approve a lease of property to Omnipoint for the construction of a cell tower at Coventry High and Washington Oak.

The second issue related to revenues and conditions of the lease. Superintendent Di Pietro has the assurance of the Town Manager that revenues generated from the lease of school-managed property will be designated for school purposes. The property will remain in the ownership of the Town. Property is not leased, as with Blackrock.

Motion No. 09-12-12 by Vice-Chairman Perra, seconded by Member Tomasso, to rescind the approval for the Town to enter into a lease with Omnipoint to construct cell towers at Coventry High and Washington Oak school sites. Motion unanimously approved.

Motion No. 09-12-13 by Vice-Chairman Perra, seconded by Member Tomasso, to authorize the Town to enter into a lease agreement to construct a cell tower at Hopkins Hill and a cell tower at Coventry High with co-signature of the school department and subject to assurance that the cell tower revenues will be applied to school expenses and that the lease provides for lease termination in the event that the cell towers pose a concern to the safety or welfare of the community. Motion unanimously approved.

### Substitute Hourly Rate:

Coventry schools are experiencing a failure to replace required teaching assistants for regulatory support which may be due to the fact that Coventry's minimum wage rate for substitute teacher assistants is the lowest in the State. A study done in 2006 showed that the lowest rate then for teacher assistant substitutes was \$8.00/hour with the average for the State at approximately \$8.50/hour. The recommendation is to increase the hourly rate to \$8.50/hour effective in January or July. Our current practice is to replace regulatory teacher assistants who are absent with extended hours of employed teacher assistants at an hourly rate of \$13.00 - \$17.00 per hour.

There is also under consideration a concept of rate differential for teacher assistant support to more involved classrooms. One of the prevailing concerns is that substitute teacher assistants are selecting less-involved positions, resulting in classrooms with higher-need students without support.

Motion No. 09-12-14 by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_, to set a rate of \$8.50/hour for substitute teacher assistants effective January 4, 2010. Motion unanimously approved.

### 2010 Curriculum Adoption:

Assistant Superintendent Convery presented recommendations for curriculum adoptions based on submissions, review by the curriculum council and alignment to the district strategic plan, as well as an explanation of cost and perceived benefits. Curriculum adoptions are considered in December in order to allow students to design programs of studies for the next school year and to provide for budget development. Mr. Convery also provided an update on the progress of current curriculum efforts and pending developments.

Motion No. 09-12-14 by Vice-Chairman Perra, seconded by Member Hetherman, to support the adoption of a course at Coventry High School entitled Food Production and Land Use as part of a pathway development for environmental studies. Motion unanimously approved.

### Alternative Funding Committee Update:

Member Tomasso presented an update on the work of the alternative funding study team. To date, the study team has considered the cost of mandates which lead to a request for a meeting with Town leaders and representatives to seek relief. Members of the study team have investigated school districts which have constructed wind turbines to power the school saving costs for energy needs and generating revenues by selling excess energy production back to the grid. While the alternative funding study team has not prepared a summary report on its findings or recommendations, evidence of interest on the part of the Town to investigate alternative energy savings may suggest that the Committee prepare a notice to the Town that a study team has been investigating energy savings and would respectfully request that a member of the School Committee and/or school administration be involved in any similar study by the Town.

### In\$ite Report:

Finance Director Reazor prepared the annual In\$ite report which requires a review by the School Committee before forwarding it to the Rhode Island Department of Education. The In\$ite report provides a summary of expenditures for the past year and can provide both the school system and the State with a comparison of costs over years on selected cost centers. The Department of Education has used In\$ite to consider such issues as a fair-funding formula and tuition rates, as well as special education and transportation costs.

Motion No. 09-12-15 by Vice-Chairperson Perra, supported by Member Hetherman, to approve the In\$ite Report for FY2009 as presented. Motion unanimously approved.

### Three-Year Budget Projection:

The three-year budget projection submitted to the School Committee is an annual requirement by both Town and State regulations. The 3-year budget projection does not exceed S3050 limits, includes contractual agreements for salary and benefits and adjusts for modest increases in health care costs (2%). Adoption of the 3-year budget projection does not limit the full FY2011 budget recommendation for Coventry Public Schools which will undergo development from February to June, 2010. It is a first notice of potential expenses and revenues over the next three years which allows the Town to forecast budget projections.

Motion No. 09-12-16 by Member Hetherman, supported by Vice-Chairman Perra, to approve the 3-year budget projection as presented. Motion unanimously approved.

### Five-Year Capital Budget Projection:

Each year, similar to the three-year budget projection, the school system is required to provide a five-year capital improvement plan and budget. In FY2010 (current) the Town did approve \$250,000 to repair a section of the roof (former administration wing) section at Feinstein Middle School. The Capital Budget continues to submit the primary capital improvement needs which were unable to be achieved through an unsuccessful bond referendum. The entire plan and the FY2011 request has little to no chance of being fully funded, but it does provide capital budget forecasting and is a requirement for both State and Federal grants to demonstrate the reported needs and priorities for capital improvements.

Motion No. 09-12-17 by Vice-Chairman Perra, supported by Member Tomasso to approve the Five-Year, Capital Improvement Plan for Coventry Public Schools as presented. Motion unanimously approved.

Motion No. 09-12-18 by Vice-Chairman Perra, seconded by Member Tomasso to extend the School Committee beyond the 10:00 p.m. ending time. Motion unanimously approved.

#### Superintendent's Report:

Enrollments are maintaining and attendance has improved (lower flu absences)

Superintendent Di Pietro reported on the first round of flu clinics, and the State proposed the second round of clinics for grades K-5 currently planned for January and February (if CDC requires).

High School Reform Visit – Superintendent Di Pietro reported on the Commissioner's Review process for Coventry High School's (and district's) efforts to meet high school reform regulations.

Superintendent Di Pietro provided a summary of the focus of efforts in the district on the strategic plan. A request was made to review the option of using a listserv to communicate with parents on matters that would otherwise be considered solicitation (such as the Stop & Shop program to support schools). The preliminary response from our legal counsel is that the listserv can be used for non-commercial notices – but we currently do use the listserv for such notices. The Superintendent will need to research this at the State level. One noted concern is that if the district does choose to notify parents through the listserv of such commercial opportunities, the question would be how we would justify or regulate the multitude of other commercial requests. We need to apply reasonable, defined limits.

#### Committee Liaison Reports:

#### Citizens' Comments:

#### Scheduling of Next Meeting:

Motion No. 09-12-19 by Vice-Chairperson, supported by Member Hetherman, that the next meeting of the School Committee be scheduled for Tuesday, January 12, 2010. Motion unanimously approved.

#### Adjournment:

Motion No. 09-12-20 by Vice-Chairman Perra, supported by Member Tomasso, that the meeting be adjourned at 10:30 p.m. Motion unanimously approved.

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Approved by School Committee 1/12/2010