



BOARD OF EDUCATION
COLUMBIA, CONNECTICUT

Kerry Hoffman, Chairperson
Karin Vertefeuille, Vice Chairperson
David Crim
Christopher Lent
Lisa Napolitano
Lauren Perrotti-Verboven
Kathy Tolsdorf
Laurence Fearon, Superintendent

February 10, 2014
SPECIAL MEETING
7:30 p.m.
Horace W. Porter School Cafeteria

Board Members Present: David Crim, Kerry Hoffman, Christopher Lent, Lisa Napolitano, Lauren Perotti-Verboven, Kathy Tolsdorf, Karin Vertefeuille

Administration Present: Laurence (Lol) Fearon

Others Present: Beverly Ciurylo, Genoveva Person, Laurie Rogers

- **Call to Order**

Kerry Hoffman called the February 10, 2014, regular meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

- **Pledge of Allegiance**

- **Comments from the Audience (Bylaws of the Board #9300)**

Time allotted for public participation is twenty (20) minutes; time allotted for an individual speaker is three (3) minutes.

Laurie Rogers, 48 Hennequin Rd., has an eighth grader who is trying to choose a high school to attend. In the past, shadowing was a tool available to students. She is aware E.O. Smith doesn't do shadowing with other incoming freshmen. Ms. Rogers feels this is primarily due to the fact that the other towns sending students to E.O. Smith don't have other high school options. She noted her child is now more confused over the choice following the visit Bolton and E.O. Smith. Ms. Rogers would like to see shadowing considered a part of student's education experience and not considered part of attendance.

Gen Person, 558 Rt. 87 – Ms. Person reports she considers the high school choice a big decision impacting her child's education/ She strongly supports her children's educational experience. She would also like shadowing considered as part of the educational experience and not an attendance issue. Her son was disheartened by the E.O. experience and is now questioning his decision to attend there. They were unable to ask students and teachers questions. She noted several families had reported a similar experience.

K. Hoffman said the administrative staff will get back to the parents to address their concerns.

- **Presentation – 2014/2015 Columbia Board of Education Budget – Lol Fearon, Superintendent**

L. Fearon described the budget packet contents which include projected enrollment estimates for next year. The original budget came in at a 7.4% increase which has been reduced to a 5.8% increase or a 5.38% increase after application of grant funds. There are no major changes in staffing or programming proposed.

Medical benefits for Anthem are currently at an 18.6% increase. These benefits are for the non-certified staff and administration only. A broker is currently shopping for a comparable plan at a lower cost. The certified staff benefits will be changing to HSA on 7/1/2014.

L. Perrotti-Verboven noted the 18.6% increase in benefit costs will be for one year.

L. Fearon reports some of the increase results from some of the unfunded gaps in the 2013-14 budget as well as fixed costs for salaries and tuition. The proposed budget assumes curriculum and technology development by

Eastconn. A five year plan of development is proposed. He noted much of the supplies for this school year were pre-paid so the 2014/15 budget shows a significant increase for that line item. Tuition has increased significantly partially because we are unsure of where students will chose to attend so at this time tuition is calculated at the highest high school rate. Magnet school tuition is based on a projected number of 34 students, which is also difficult to anticipate, for a cost of \$170,000 for grades K-8.

There is a state wide suggestion to have a moratorium on magnet schools since funding the magnet schools was not planned and they are proving to be a drain on local school systems. He noted the reduction of students is across grade levels and doesn't warrant reduction in staff as the impact to each grade level is minimal.

The cost of a high school late bus was investigated and is estimated to be \$50 per day or \$9,000 for the school year. The bus could potentially pick up students at E.O. Smith then Bolton and return them to Porter. The ride is expected to be about 1 hour. The estimate doesn't include Windham at this time.

Members discussed options considering running a smaller bus and a co-pay system as well as supervision issues which could arise.

Revenue has decreased due to a reduction in grant funding.

L. Perrotti-Verboven noted the costs included in the budget for special education are based on the education plans that were developed last May for exactly what services were recommended.

L. Fearon said there is an increase in special education tuition but a decrease in transportation costs due to a shift in graduation.

He indicated Chris Urban is working diligently to reduce the deficit in food services and one of the ways of off setting costs is by proposing more luncheons at the Beckish Senior Center. He anticipates reducing the deficit to approximately \$18,000.

K. Vertefeuille asked if options for the hot lunch program have been investigated so there is no deficit to the town.

L. Perrotti-Verboven said the Food Services Director has a one year contract. Last year the Board looked into the possibility of going to bid which would've cost approximately \$25,000 in legal fees. She suggested seeing what other area schools are doing.

L. Napolitano said something is missing when the food is not cooked at the school.

L. Perrotti-Verboven asked if the need for a before school breakfast was considered.

L. Fearon said he had checked and it was not successful in the past.

D. Crim asked if a meal plan, something similar to what occurs in college could be considered.

L. Fearon said his experience in prior school systems of going to bid results in reduced costs for about 1-2 years but becomes very costly after that.

- **Action Items (Consent)**

To be read by Board of Education Chairperson prior to taking action:

A consent agenda is presented by the Chairman at the beginning of a meeting. Items may be removed from the consent agenda on the request of any one member. Items not removed may be adopted by general consent without debate. Removed items may be taken up either immediately after the consent agenda or placed later on the agenda at the discretion of the assembly.

- a) Approval of Payment of Bills
- b) Approval of December 2, 2013 Regular Meeting Minutes
- c) Approval of December 9, 2013 Special Meeting Minutes
- d) Approval of January 13, 2014 Special Meeting Minutes

- e) Approval of the 2014/2015 Columbia Board of Education Budget Timeline
- f) Appointment of Crista Peters, Kindergarten Paraprofessional
- g) E.O. Smith/Region 19 Tuition Contract

L. Napolitano MOVED, K. Hoffman SECONDED, to accept and approve the consent action items a-f as written and presented.

L. Perrotti-Verboven requested items f and b be removed from the approval for discussion.

L. Perrotti-Verboven asked if the appointment of the Kindergarten Paraprofessional is a new position or replacement.

The position is a replacement.

C. Lent requested correction of the minutes of 12/2/13. XIII. Future Regular and Subcommittee Agenda Items (tentative) – item #3 – D. Crim thanked... be changed to C. Lent thanked ...

Motion to approve the action items as corrected CARRIES 7:0.

- **Correspondence/Communications**

- a) Town of Columbia Audited Financial Statements – June 30, 2013
- b) CABA CONNECTION
- c) CABA's Day on the Hill – March 5, 2014 @ 8:30 a.m. the Bushnell, Hartford

K. Tolsdorf suggested board members provide information they would like presented.

- **Reports/Discussions**

- Lebanon Tuition Contract

K. Hoffman said she was contacted by the Lebanon BOE Chair to see if Columbia would be interested in contracting with Lebanon in the future.

Members agreed the experience of contracting with Lebanon had been a very positive one but the decision not to renew is appropriate. Consensus is that there are enough high school options at this time and it is in the best interest to continue with the choices we have in place.

- Windham Public Schools Memorandum of Understanding

Revisions including legal responsibilities and chairing of planning and placement team meetings were included. The memorandum of understanding was signed.

- **Board of Education Chairperson**

- **Board of Education Subcommittees**

- Future Meeting Dates:
 - March 3, 2014
 - Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m. Horace W. Porter Cafeteria

The upcoming meeting and budget schedule was reviewed.

- **Superintendent's Report**

L. Fearon noted the professional evaluation program (PEAK) tying teacher evaluation to student progress has been put on hold. The teacher evaluation process has recently been revised to hold formal evaluations every three years and informal evaluations on the other years for teachers who have scored as effective or higher during formal evaluations.

- **Future Regular and Subcommittee Agenda Items (Tentative)**

- **Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks**

K. Vertefeuille asked if the policy concerning shadowing and absences could be addressed as a policy change.

L. Fearon said absentee policies are driven by state policies which are driven by statutes. The principal is meeting with colleagues at Region 19 and will be sharing feedback.

L. Perrotti-Verboven asked why shadowing was cancelled. She felt it was a good experience.

L. Fearon noted the potential for disruption of education which could result in as many as 9 days with 1/3 of students missing. Students are still allowed to shadow.

K. Vertefeuille felt the Bolton visit was excellent but the EO visit and presentations were poorly organized.

L. Perrotti-Verboven feels shadowing is important and should be a school activity.

K. Tolsdorf suggested board members prepare a statement to address the impact of magnet schools on small towns.

C. Lent mentioned representative Tim Ackert has a informational presentation on common core standards scheduled for Feb. 26, 2014 at 6:30.

K. Vertefeuille has suggested Porter's website be redone and has been in contact with UCONN's department of digital technology. She is checking to see if UCONN can offer assistance to better brand the school and town.

- **Adjournment**

K. Hoffman MOVED, D. Crim SECONDED to adjourn the meeting at 9:15. MOTION CARRIES 7:0.

Respectfully submitted,

Karin Vertefeuille
Columbia Board of Education Vice Chairperson