



Columbia Board of Education
February 11, 2015
Special Meeting
7:30 p.m.
Horace W. Porter School Cafeteria

Board Members Present: David Crim, Christopher Lent, Lisa Napolitano, Kathy Tolsdorf, Karin Vertefeuille-Vice Chairperson, Linette Dooley

Board Members Absent: Kerry Hoffman-Chairperson

Others Present: Lol Fearon-Superintendent, Beverly Ciurylo- Finance, Mary-Kate Farley-Director of Student Services, Alyssa Gwinnell-Principal, Michael Kenyon-Assistant Principal/Data Coordinator

I. Call to Order

Karin Vertefeuille-Vice Chairperson, called the February 11, 2015 Special Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. 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.

IV. Presentations

a) Website Review – Alyssa Gwinnell, Principal, & Karin Vertefeuille, BOE Vice Chairperson

Principal Gwinnell introduced the district and school web sites. Both she and Karin Vertefeuille worked on the site.

She hopes the district site will help provide information to prospective families moving to Columbia. She described the site as user friendly and explained how to navigate through each area of the site including the links. Every grade level has a calendar which can be posted to their own individual calendar or the district calendar. Continued support and assistance has been provided to staff including personalized support and group presentations. Administration has been working through the kinks and moving towards most effective use of the site.

Mrs. Vertefeuille worked primarily on the district portion of the site. The district page will provide more acknowledgement for all of the students in Columbia. She reviewed navigating the site using the tabs and drop downs. She hopes to include student achievements and is soliciting information from parents at elementary and high school levels about activities that are going on at the schools. Awards can be included in this section as well.

Principal Gwinnell noted at the very bottom of the site is a place for people to submit comments and suggestions. The side bar connects to social media to share information to sites such as Facebook, twitter, and email. This will be a very useful tool for staff and students. Emergency alerts or notification of special events appear as a banner across the top of the web page

Lol Fearon noted both Mrs. Gwinnell and Mrs. Vertefeuille have spent a lot of time on this. He feels the improvements to the web site are money well spent.

The BOE thanked Mrs. Vertefeulle and Mrs. Gwinnell for their hard work.

b) Technology Update – Alyssa Gwinnell, Principal

Principal Gwinnell provided an update on technology. The update is focused on SPIN an acronym for situation, problems, implications and needs. The model is budget focused.

SITUATION

Current situation at Porter – 7th 8th graders have 1:1 iPads.

Elementary teachers are requesting iPads - iPads are more user friendly to younger children because they don't use a mouse and because of the apps that are available.

4-6 – having a mixed request for iPad and laptops.

Students in 3-8 need to be proficient on a device for sbac testing – They need to be able to manipulate a mouse, click, point, drag and highlight. This can be accomplished on an iPad (along with a keyboard). It's difficult to manipulate and use the information on the iPad. Teachers are planning to use desk top computers for sbac testing. The library, computer lab and Spanish room will be used as SBAC testing areas. A calendar for SBAC evaluations has been created and distributed to staff. The testing window for SBAC is March 17 to May 12th.

PROBLEMS

Problems were identified (based on teacher surveys, discipline log records and insurance returns)

Bringing iPads home causes several issues:

Monitoring apps

Care of iPads - iPads have been dropped or used in ways they shouldn't be. Some students are using apps inappropriately and this is difficult to monitor. Bringing iPads home has caused several issues including care and not all families want them in their home.

Usability – iPad are not optimal for graphing, typing, and Microsoft products and printing.

IMPLICATIONS:

Continual repairs

iPads will not last

Buying multiple sets of protective gear

Angst with parents (Teacher/school/home relationship)

Teachers have to create alternate assignments (paper)

Needing to use other technology to meet needs of curriculum

Multiple platforms causes inefficiency in accessing materials

Mrs. Vertefeulle – devices become obsolete very quickly. Getting everyone to release their accounts from the iPad (apple id's) created difficulty removing the personal information.

Mrs. Tolsdorf asked if Board of Education Policies are followed concerning iPad use and repairs.

NEEDS

Middle school students need access to technology – based on tech plan laptops are more appropriate – upper level Microsoft office suite on a higher level which can't be accomplished on an iPad.

Elementary students also need access to technology – (proficient by grade 3) – prior to grade 3 they need to use technology and teachers prefer iPads which have apps more geared towards elementary students and their motor skill development.

The cost to purchase iPads is almost twice as much as buying laptops. We suggest stopping additional iPad purchasing and move iPad to the areas where they are requested. Laptops would be purchased and would remain at school. They would be available for each student but and would stay in school.

iPad at the elementary level would stay in the school and not be taken home.

L. Dooley asked if there are students who don't have access to computers at home.

Principal Gwinnell - we've done surveys to see if anyone does not have access – it is very few to none.

SPINS into a Plan

Move the iPads to Elementary k-3 possibly 4th and 5/6 science

Distribute current iPads on cart

Distribute laptops on cart

Purchase laptops for classroom (needs survey was given)

Create a third computer lab in existing classroom 701 which currently has 19 desktops – room will be available next year as an additional lab – the teacher will be moved to another room . This will free up access to the 19 computers in the room.

Access points are already being purchased

Charging stations will be purchased as needed.

K. Vertefeuille asked how much of this is being put in place and how much is being requested.

Alyssa Gwinnell - REAP grant would fund expense but we wanted you to know what process we used to get to the request.

Board members requested the total cost for the purchase of technology including hard and software. They appreciate the advance planning.

V. 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 January 5, 2015 Budget Subcommittee Meeting Minutes*

b) *Approval of January 5, 2015 Regular Meeting Minutes*

Chris Lent **MOVED**, David Crim **SECONDED** to approve the January 5, 2015 Regular Meeting Minutes and Subcommittee Meeting Minutes as presented. **MOTION CARRIES 6:0.**

VI. Action Items – Discuss & Act Upon

a) *Approval of Columbia School District Long-Range Plan Flyer*

Superintendent Fearon updated the Board concerning the district long range plan including revisions suggested by the board. He feels the feedback of the board and teachers will improve the flow of the document. We now have a complete document intended to be a mailer. With board approval, we will print and mail the plan out with some pre-publicity.

K. Tolsdorf suggested enlargement of some of the photos.

C. Lent **MOVED**, K. Tolsdorf **SECONDED** to approve the Columbia School District Long-Range Plan flyer.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0.

C. Lent commented the plan came out very well.

b) *Approval of Payment of Bills & Expenditure Report*

K. Tolsdorf **MOVED**, C. Lent **SECONDED** to approve the Bills and Expenditure Report as presented. **MOTION CARRIES 6:0.**

VII. Correspondence/Communications

a) *Ann Clairmont to All Porter Staff – 12/22/2014 Porter Express*

b) *Karen Caputo Thanks to St. Columba Church – 01/05/2015*

Lol – programs in place over the holiday season pulled in

c) *Town of Columbia Audited Financial Statements – June 30, 2014*

Lol – no audit problems. Presented to selectmen – for your information

VIII. Board of Education Subcommittees

• Future Meeting Dates:

- February 9, 2015 – Budget Subcommittee Meeting, 6:30 p.m. H.W.P. LMC Conference Room
STRIKE ALREADY PASSED
- February 18, 2015 (Wed.) - Budget Subcommittee Meeting, 6:3 p.m. H.W.P. LMC Conference Room
- February 23, 2015 – Public Hearing/Special Meeting, 7:00 p.m. H.W.P. Caf CHANGE TO 7:30
- March 2, 2015 – Regular Board of Education Meeting with Budget Approval, 7:30 p.m. H.W.P. Cafeteria
- March 11, 2015 – FiPAC Meeting Where BOE Presents Budget, 7:00 p.m. Town Hall
- March 18, 2015 – FiPAC Special Meeting, 7:00 p.m. Town Hall
- March 25, 2015 – FiPAC Special Meeting, 7:00 p.m. Town Hall

Mr. Fearon provided possible alternative meeting dates for negotiations meetings which were missed. Members agreed to meet on February 18th along with the budget meeting from 6-7 then hold the budget meeting at 7:00.

Policy Subcommittee meeting - Members agreed to combine budget meeting on February 23rd with the policy subcommittee meeting commencing at 6:30 and to reset the public hearing to begin at 7:30 instead of 7:00.

IX. Superintendent's Report

a) 2015/2016 Budget Update

b) Report on Building Evacuation 01/29/2015

L. Fearon provided an update on the evacuation on January 29th. An odor was detected in the morning. It was difficult to determine if the odor came from the interior or exterior of the building. Principal Gwinnell Assistant Principal Kenyon and Mike Sylvester took charge and did a terrific job. They were in contact with officials as soon as the odor was identified as a gas smell. Teachers and students in the immediate area were moved out. Mike Sylvester identified source of problem which was not internal but an external leak at propane tank. Mrs. Gwinnell and Mr. Kenyon were on phone with Mr. Fearon and made a determination to evacuate entire school. Calls were made immediately to the fire department, building official and Uncas gas. Because we were able to isolate the location of the problem this was a low level evacuation. Students were able to get their belongings and leave. If it weren't a low level incident, belongings would've been left behind and the building evacuated immediately. Evacuation areas were far away enough to be safe. Buses were on site within 15 min. Once evacuated Mrs. Gwinnell sent out text/voice and email notifications. Staff debriefed the next day. Problems with voice message were identified. A portion of the announcement was missing didn't provide an explanation of the evacuation. The message was repeated and corrected.

Students were loaded on buses and dismissed. The evacuation drill plan was followed to the letter and there was a minimal amount of problems with parents coming to the parking lot/dismissal areas.

Staff members rode busses. Any students who could not enter their homes were brought back to school due to the cold temperatures. Teachers on buses radioed staff at the evacuation area and parents were contacted so children could be picked up.

Some areas of improvement were identified. Once attendance is taken children will be lined up by bus to be able to board buses quicker.

Parents who did come wanted to enter the school grounds. Fire and police personnel will assist staff to provide support if further evacuations occur.

Closing of route 87 – now one of our first calls will include resident state trooper to close route 87 to allow busses into parking lot and exit.

By approximately 11:00 almost everyone was picked up. The last student pick up was at 1:00 Went as well as drill had been practiced in the past.

Administration tried to be sure parents were informed along the way. Several messages were provided to parents

K. Vertefeuille said this was a good opportunity to see what happens in a real situation instead of drill. She would like to see new plan submitted to the board for review. She suggested reaching out to fire marshal to find out what is the recommended procedure for gas leak.

L. Fearon noted the determination to evacuate was following the advice of the fire department who were on site.

L. Fearon said there was a great community response and cooperation from the DPW and building staff. Mr. Pete Hendrickson cleaned up both of the evacuation sites, Mike Sylvester was on top of things and George Murphy assisted with directing traffic.

D. Crim felt administration reacted as well as could be expected and appreciated the vigilance and messages and felt the evacuation was done correctly.

X. Future Regular and Subcommittee Agenda Items (Tentative)

XI. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks

C. Lent extended kudos for all hard work on the web site.

XII. Adjournment

Lisa Napolitano **MOVED**, Linette Dooley **SECONDED** to adjourn the meeting at 9:19 p.m.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karin Vertefeuille,
Columbia Board of Education Vice Chairperson