



Columbia Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes March 3, 2014

7:30 P.M.

Horace W. Porter School Cafeteria

Board Members Present: David Crim was present by telephone, Kerry Hoffman-Chairperson, Christopher Lent, Lisa Napolitano was present by telephone, Lauren Perrotti-Verboven, Kathy Tolsdorf, Karin Vertefeuille-Vice Chairperson

Administration Present: Lol Fearon-Superintendent, Alyssa Gwinnell-Principal

Others Present: Senator Cathy Osten, Bev Ciurylo-Finance Director, Barbara Hilbie-Grade 7 LA/Reading Teacher, Linette Dooley

I. Call to Order

Kerry Hoffman called the March 3, 2014, regular meeting to order at 7:50 p.m. She apologized for the delay to the start of the meeting.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Proclamation

- March is Board of Education Appreciation Month – Thank You Columbia Board of Education Members!
Superintendent Fearon acknowledged and thanked each Board member for their time and commitment to educating Columbia's students. He presented each member with a box of chocolates.

Changes to the agenda:

L. Perrotti-Verboven **MOVED** and C. Lent **SECONDED** to change the order of the agenda and make Discussion and Approval of 2014/2015 Columbia Board of Education Budget, item V.

MOTION CARRIES: 7-0

IV. 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.

- State Senator Cathy Osten** asked the Board if they have any budget concerns or topics they would like addressed at the state level. She shared her contact information and welcomed Board members to contact her with any concerns.
- K. Tolsdorf** said the Board is concerned about the cost of magnet schools and the impact this cost is having on our district's budget. Our Board is facing the possibility of cutting programs and staffing at Porter School because of it. This is a very real burden to our community. The Board would like to be reimbursed for these costs.
- L. Perrotti-Verboven** said districts want to be competitive but magnet schools do not have the same mandates as public schools. She asked where the funding for these schools will come from. She fears the cost of transporting magnet school students is on the horizon.
- K. Hoffman** thanked Senator Osten for coming to this evening's meeting.

V. Discussion & Approval of 2014/2015 Columbia Board of Education Budget

Mrs. Hoffman thanked Superintendent Fearon for his budget work, detailed explanations and ability to defend the proposed budget. She thanked Town Finance Director Bev Ciurylo for her work on the BOE budget and appreciates the collaboration between administrators, staff and superintendent.

- **C. Lent** asked about the slight increase from the last meeting.
- **Mr. Fearon** explained that since the February 24th budget meeting, the finance department has gotten a clearer picture of the dollar amounts for 2014/15 salaries and benefits. The overall budget percentage has increased and is now 5.25%.
- **K. Hoffman** is leery of putting forward a 5.25% increase and feels it will be hard to get public support.
- **C. Lent** agrees with Mrs. Hoffman. He asked if preschool will need four sections next year. Can the Board make a cut to this program and still meet the needs of children?
- **K. Tolsdorf** agrees that a 5.25% increase will be a hard sell but would like to see the budget defended as is this first time around.
- **L. Perrotti-Verboven** agrees with Mrs. Tolsdorf.
- **L. Napolitano** appreciates everything that has been done but feels that the Board cannot go before the Town with this kind of increase.
- **D. Crim** agrees with Mrs. Napolitano and feels the Board should find areas to cut.
- **K. Vertefeuille** asked if a cut is made in pk what kind of impact would it have.
- **Mr. Fearon** explained Porter's pk program identifies and provides services to special needs prek students starting at 3 years of age. The program is most effective with heterogeneous grouping. The program is designed to mix 50/50 special education students and model students. This year the mix is 75% model students to 25% developmental needs students. The expense of this program is staffing; the savings would be one teacher and one paraprofessional.
- **K. Vertefeuille** feels the Porter Pals program is an excellent program that helps with kindergarten readiness. She agrees with Mr. Lent that the Board needs to be fiscally responsible. 5.25% will be hard to pass. The Board will have to make some hard choices.
- **L. Perrotti-Verboven** feels this is a year to keep status quo. 5.25% is maintaining the BOE's budget. In the past, the Board has been criticized for having a surplus. She would rather go to bat first. The pk savings will be a 1% savings.
- **K. Tolsdorf** feels the PK program is the only real area that will be a savings with the least amount of damage. At this time she would like to defend the budget and go with the consensus of the Board.

C. Lent **MOVED** and K. Hoffman **SECONDED** to reduce the 2014/2015 budget by \$100,000 by eliminating two sections of the pk program.

MOTION FAILS: 1-6

C. Lent **VOTED FOR THE MOTION**

D. Crim (by telephone), K. Hoffman, L. Napolitano (by telephone), L. Perrotti-Verboven, K. Tolsdorf, K. Vertefeuille **VOTED AGAINST THE MOTION**

- **K. Vertefeuille** would like parents to know that the Superintendent has researched the cost of a late bus for high school students and that many on the Board support this. At this time, given where the Board of Education is with the budget, this topic will be considered and looked at again in the future. Board members agreed that at the cost of \$9,300 for each bus and the need for 3 late high school buses this is not the right time to add this option. The Board has discussed considering prepaid bus passes. Of the 140 families surveyed, 105 families responded.

L. Perrotti-Verboven **MOVED** and K. Hoffman **SECONDED** to approve the 2014/2015 Columbia Board of Education budget as presented with a 5.25% increase.

MOTION CARRIES: 5-2

D. Crim (by telephone), K. Hoffman, L. Perrotti-Verboven, K. Tolsdorf, K. Vertefeuille **VOTED FOR THE MOTION**

C. Lent, L. Napolitano (by telephone) **VOTED AGAINST THE MOTION**

David Crim and Lisa Napolitano left the meeting (by telephone) at 8:25 p.m.

VI. 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 February 10, 2014 Special Meeting Minutes
- c) Approval of February 24, 2014 Special Meeting & Budget Hearing Minutes
- d) Appointment of Girls Track coach – Cory Tobler
- e) Appointment of Parent Volunteer Assistant Boys Baseball Coach – Brian Pedersen

K. Hoffman **MOVED** and L. Perrotti-Verboven **SECONDED** to approve VI. Action Items a through d as presented above.

MOTION CARRIES: 5-0

C. Lent **MOVED** K. Tolsdorf **SECONDED** to table item VI.e – Appointment of Parent Volunteer Assistant Boys Basketball Coach – Brian Pedersen from the listed action items for further discussion and vote on March 10, 2014 at the Board of Education's Special Meeting.

MOTION CARRIES: 5-0

VII. Discussion & Approval of Revisions to Teacher Evaluation Plan

Superintendent Fearon explained that the Columbia Board of Education has approved the 2013/14 Teacher Evaluation Plan. This plan ties student achievement to the teacher evaluation process. Last year, Columbia was a pilot district. There has been pressure put on government offices and the Education Commissioner regarding the number of evaluations that must be conducted and the time it takes to do this. Small districts have had to hire administrators to conduct the mandated number of evaluations. In addition, student testing results will not

be available until late fall. Because of this pressure, the State is allowing school districts to apply for a Flexibility to 2013/2014 District Educator Evaluation and Support Plan.

- Mrs. Gwinnell and Mrs. Hilbie reviewed the State Department of Education flexibility request:
- Student Growth Goals/Objectives - Each teacher will write two SMART goals. Teachers who have appropriate standardized assessments available will create one SMART goal based on that and one SMART goal based on a non-standardized assessment. All other teachers may develop their two SMART goals based on non-standardized assessment.
- Use of State Test Data – This will need to be amended if there is no longer going to be an SPI even as a district participating in the CMT. If this is true, Porter’s will change to 5%.

K. Hoffman **MOVED** and K. Vertefeuille **SECONDED** to approve Columbia’s revisions to the Teacher Evaluation Plan as presented.

MOTION CARRIES: 5-0

VIII. Discussion & Approval of Columbia Teacher Association Memorandum of Agreement (3/31)

Mr. Fearon explained that so far this winter, there have been six school days cancelled because of inclement weather. Five of the six days will be made up June 9 through June 13th. Rather than taking a day from the April vacation, the Columbia Teacher Association is in agreement to make March 31 a student school day rather than a full staff development day. There will be an early dismissal that day with professional development for teachers in the afternoon.

- **K. Vertefeuille** thanked Laurie Rogers for her suggestion for keeping the April vacation intact by making March 31 a school day with early release for students and afternoon professional development for teachers. She clarified that the Memorandum of Agreement is a one page document and that the letter from the Teacher Union officers should not be included.

C. Lent **MOVED** and L. Perrotti-Verboven **SECONDED** to approve the Columbia Teacher Association Memorandum of Agreement (3/31) as presented.

MOTION CARRIES: 5-0

IX. Correspondence/Communications

- Superintendent Fearon To Principal Gwinnell – Letter of Tenure
Mr. Fearon stands behind Mrs. Gwinnell and is proud to have her serving as Porter’s Principal. (Applause)
- A Day on the Hill – March 5, 2014, 8:30 a.m., The Bushnell – Autorino Great Hall
Mr. Fearon and Mrs. Tolsdorf will be attending A Day on the Hill. They will pass the Board’s concerns on to State Legislators.

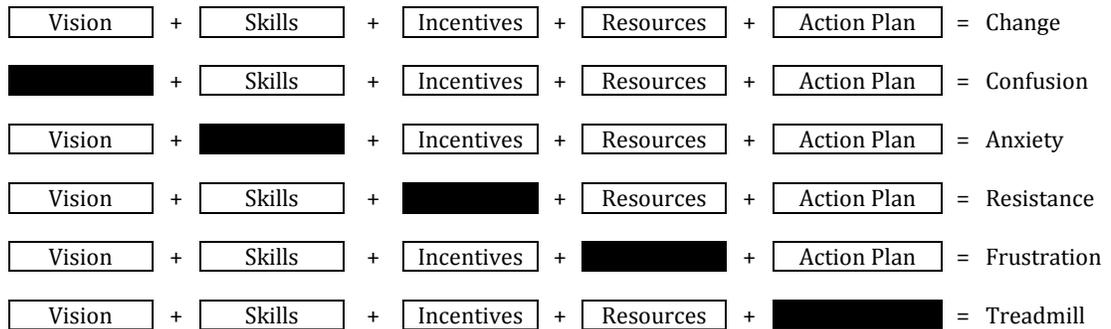
X. Presentation – Long Range Planning

- *Board of Education Role in Improving Student Achievement*
The Superintendent explained that the Board of Education contributes to student learning by:
 1. *Setting clear expectations* – being clear about the greatest student needs, communicating high expectations, establishing a clear and narrow focus, focusing on teaching and learning – supporting improving instruction, developing policies that reflect expectations.
 2. *Creating conditions for success* – demonstrating a commitment to improvement through actions and decision, supporting high quality professional development, staying the course, supporting and connecting with district/school leadership, developing and nurturing the

Board/Superintendent team, ensuring alignment with educational practices, ensuring alignment with policy.

3. Holding the system accountable – using data, what is the evidence for success, monitoring progress, applying pressure for accountability, do policies reflect expectations.
4. Building public will – creating awareness of needs, creating a sense of urgency, instilling hope that change is possible, connecting with the community, what policies reflect communications and community involvement.
5. Learning together as a team – establishing Board learning time, learning together, talking-engaging in Board conversations, willingness to lead and allow others to lead, building commitment to improvement through shared information and discussion, what policies encourage Board development, leading through policy.

MANAGING CHANGE



XI. Reports/Discussions

- a) Columbia District Tenure Report - **Superintendent Fearon** would like to inform the Board of Education when certified staff members reach tenure with the Columbia School District. Reaching tenure means meeting the district's high educational standards. (Tenure is calculated by 40 months of continuous service or 20 months of continuous service if tenured in another district).
- b) MBR Allocation – Mr. Fearon has contacted MBR Committee members to inform them that MBR funds are paying for security work, the gym curtain/mechanicals replacement, cameras and professional development. A report with MBR spending including deficit numbers will be prepared for the April 7 Board of Education meeting.
- c) Magnet School Position Statement – **Mrs. Tolsdorf** handed out copies of the magnet school position statement. The Board reviewed and made revision suggestions. **C. Lent** said as a parent, he promotes choice and the Board's statement should focus on how magnet schools are being funded and how these costs are an undue burden to towns. **L. Perrotti-Verboven** would like the statement to focus on the hardships and funding for districts. She also asked about special education responsibilities to students at magnet schools. She feels that funding magnet school tuition is causing public schools to have less. **Mrs. Tolsdorf** will redraft the letter for Wednesday's Day on the Hill and send it to BOE members.

XII. Possible Action on Magnet School Position Statement

XIII. Board of Education Subcommittees

- Future Meeting Dates:
 - March 05, 2014 – A Day on the Hill, 8:30 a.m., The Bushnell – Autorino Great Hall
 - March 10, 2014 – Special Meeting 6:30 p.m. Horace W. Porter School Cafeteria
 - March 11, 2014 – Stipend Review Committee, 5:30 p.m. H.W.P. School Conf. Room

Board of Education Subcommittees – continued

- March 12, 2014 – FiPAC Special Meeting, 7:00 p.m. Horace W. Porter Cafeteria

- March 19, 2014 – FiPAC Special Meeting, 7:00 p.m. Town Hall
- March 26, 2014 – FiPAC Special Meeting, 7:00 p.m. Town Hall
- April 07, 2014 – Regular Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m. Horace W. Porter Cafeteria
- April 23, 2014 – Public Hearing, 7:00 p.m. Horace W. Porter School Cafeteria

XIV. Superintendent's Report

- a) Update on Eastconn Proposal

XV. Future Regular and Subcommittee Agenda Items (Tentative)

XVI. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks

XVII. Adjournment

K. Vertefeuille **MOVED** and L. Perrotti-Verboven **SECONDED** to adjourn the meeting at 10:20 p.m.

MOTION CARRIES: 5-0

Respectfully submitted,

Karin Vertefeuille
Columbia Board of Education Vice Chairperson