



Columbia Board of Education
July 13, 2015
Regular Meeting Minutes
7:30 p.m.
Horace W. Porter School Library Conference Room

Board Members Present: Linette Dooley, Lisa Napolitano, Karin Vertefeuille-Vice Chairperson, Kerry Hoffman-Chairperson, Kathy Tolsdorf, and Christopher Lent.

Others Present: Lol Fearon-Superintendent, Alyssa Gwinnell-Principal, Fayne Sears-Nurse, Nicholas Caruso, James Thorn, Jeffrey Viens, Earnest Sharpe, Carmen Vance, Judy Ortiz, Ellen Bessette, Kelley Peck.

I. Call to Order

Kerry Hoffman called the July 13, 2015, Regular 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.

None.

IV. Presentations

- *Long Range Plan Reports – Programs, Structure & Organization & Communications Committees*

Mr. Fearon made an introduction to the report. He thanked Paula Shepard for her efforts. Jim Thorne and Ellen Bessette were introduced. Ms. Bessette spoke regarding the process taken. Mr. Thorne spoke regarding the plan for building excellence in program enhancements, support administration, attracting and retaining our students. Co-teaching benefits were also recapped by Mr. Thorne. Mr. Thorne also gave Mrs. Gwinnell positive feedback on her efforts administratively.

Mrs. Vertefeuille asked, "How does co-teaching lower costs?" Mrs. Gwinnell answered with Mr. Fearon. Co-teaching is cost neutral. Example was given by Mrs. Gwinnell, that if you have two groups of 20 kids in a grade you can make that group smaller by having, for example, an enrichment teacher to divide the groups even further. Mr. Thorne stated that the focus was not necessarily on the financial end but on strengthening existing programs.

Ms. Tolsdorf asked, "In terms of structured school model, what does that mean? Co-teaching as a structured school model? Are we talking just here and there or something for the BOE to fund throughout the school? Mrs. Gwinnell stated that we will have a process structure in place. To have a structure but with a rationale was agreed the correct course.

Carmen Vance First Selectman discussed the goal of the changes. What kind of school do we want to be and how we want to attract people to Columbia should be the goal. Co-teaching isn't the goal of what you want your school to be but a process. Discussion continued. Mr. Fearon showed the goal on screen under "Our Challenge" in presentation. Discussion continued. Mr. Fearon stated that the report gives 8 possibilities of going forward. Administratively we are looking at what changes can be implemented immediately and what are long-term solutions.

Ms. Tolsdorf - Cannot see how co-teaching can solve our middle school numbers problem. Mr. Fearon replied it's a strategy you can employ at middle school level and discussion continued.

Mr. Thorne continued his report. There was a discussion about technology, distance learning. Us of Google Classroom, and the addition of a technology elective for 15-16 school year. Report presentation continued regarding technology.

Ms. Tolsdorf asked if there might be opportunities to explore additional languages, such as Latin or Chinese, using distance learning. How would that work? Mr. Fearon answered that there are online classes that are middle school based and explained further. Ms. Tolsdorf asked, will Porter provide a tutor? Can it actually be implemented? Mr. Fearon stated, yes, Chaplin does it. We don't necessarily need to hire a coordinator, use existing staff to supervise students.

Mrs. Vertefeuille started discussion about having electives and expanding world language to see interest. Start as an elective and build on it. Would like to see piloting and research on this further. Mrs. Vertefeuille also mentioned that any technology brought into the school should have a plan in advance how to implement the new technology and equipment for right purpose.

Mr. Thorne continued with a discussion of multi-aged classrooms. Mrs. Hoffman asked, with multi-aged classrooms will co-teaching be introduced? Do either of these philosophies help with enrollment? Mrs. Gwinnell discussed declining lower grade enrollments and that when they are in higher grades how multi-grade classrooms will not diminish options due to lower numbers, and specifically co-teaching and technology.

Mrs. Vance asked, if I'm a parent of a student very bright in mathematics, would what you're proposing be attractive to me or a magnet school that focuses on science or math? Mrs. Gwinnell stated that we can't compete with some specific programs. We do work with students for an individualized program at Porter if they are advanced. Discussion continued regarding Magnet schools. Mrs. Vertefeuille stated that maybe we are not promoting the fact that in a small school setting we are offering a greater flexibility. We should be citing the examples Mrs. Gwinnell gave for individual students that we have helped in the past.

Mr. Thorne continued with report regarding taking advantage of community resources. Mrs. Gwinnell stated that we have an opportunity with Dr. Mama from ECSU who wants to come in and do a writing workshop. Mr. Fearon is also looking to expand our relationship in technology and graphic arts with businesses in our community giving our students practical experience.

Mrs. Vance - Can you conceive of the first six years basic information and basic skills students should learn? Focus on those six grades and then develop your middle school with expansion of program choices. Mrs. Gwinnell stated that basic foundations have changed to a "what;" example, the greater use of technology. Curriculum at the elementary level is more concrete and differentiated as needed, middle school is when choices become part of your day. Ex. Spanish is one of our new foundations. Discussion continued.

Mr. Fearon presented the Communications Report.

Mrs. Vertefeuille questioned what will be done by August regarding communications. What will be in place and what you would be working on up on the web communication to our parents. Mr. Fearon stated that one area we want to utilize is creating a better relationship with businesses, local Lions' Club, Board of Selectman and make presentations of what we will be doing.

Mrs. Vertefeuille stated that we have done a lot already with the website, and new parent/school communications system, which is much better.

Mrs. Gwinnell stated she is already working on sending out newsletter as before but a mini version with bulk of information on the website. We have changes coming for our Open House. We will also be creating videos on subjects parents are interested in. A YouTube account is already set up. We have templates as part of our website that can be used.

Mrs. Vertefeuille stated she has concerns about high school communication, and updating district website with high school information.

- *Long Range Plan Superintendent's Recommendations After presentation tie in*

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 June 1, 2015 Regular Meeting Minutes*
- b) Approval of June 17, 2015 Special Meeting Minutes*
- c) Approval of Payment of Bills*
- d) Approval of 2014/15 Expenditure Report as of 06/30/2015 & Grant Status Report*

K. Vertefeulle **MOVED**, L. Napolitano **SECONDED** to approve the consent action items a, b, c, d as presented.
MOTION CARRIES 6:0.

VI. Action Items – Discuss & Act Upon

a) *Appointment of Ms. Jennifer Hallquist, Special Education Teacher*

L. Napolitano **MOVED**, K. Tolsdorf **SECONDED** to approve action item a as presented.
MOTION CARRIES 6:0

b) *Appointment of Ms. Brigid Keenan, .5 Technology Teacher*

C. Lent **MOVED**, L. Napolitano **SECONDED** to approve action item b as presented.
K. Vertefeulle questioned Brigid's technology experience. Both Mrs. Gwinnell and Mr. Fearon stated the interview team was very impressed and that she came with lesson plans to the interview and that she has a strong technology skill set.
MOTION CARRIES 6:0

c) *Appointment of Ms. Michelle Shive, Art Teacher*

K. Tolsdorf **MOVED**, L. Napolitano **SECONDED** to approve action item c as presented.
Mrs. Hoffman stated she is very excited about the new art teacher as is Mr. Fearon. She will be a resource for other teachers.
MOTION CARRIES 6:0

d) *Appointment of Meredith Eberhard, .6 Speech Pathologist*

K. Tolsdorf **MOVED**, K. Vertefeulle **SECONDED** to approve action item d as presented.
Mr. Lent asked that the motion be amended to .6 as it is not a full time position. Mr. Fearon stated that Ms. Eberhard cannot start until October and that we will use a substitute teacher until then.
MOTION CARRIES 6:0

e) *Appointment of Ms. Julie Freer, Special Education Paraprofessional*

K. Vertefeulle **MOVED**, L. Napolitano **SECONDED** to approve action item e as presented.
MOTION CARRIES 6:0

f) *Appointment of 2015/2016 Co-Curricular Positions*

C. Lent **MOVED**, L. Napolitano **SECONDED** to approve action item f as presented.
Mrs. Vertefeulle asked if we are filling the webmaster position and we are not at this time. Noted that National Jr. Honor Society position has not yet been filled. Asked that Mr. Fearon confirm that the position has to be a faculty member. Question on Drama Stage Director on whether it was offered out and if it was posted externally. Mr. Fearon stated it is just like a coach position where previous position holder received first option on following year.
MOTION CARRIES 5:0:1
C. Lent, L. Napolitano, K. Tolsdorf, L. Dooley, K. Hoffman **VOTED FOR THE MOTION**
K. Vertefeulle **ABSTAINED**

g) *Acceptance of Resignation – Mrs. Karen Johnson, Board of Education Clerk*

C. Lent **MOVED**, L. Napolitano **SECONDED** to approved action item g as presented.
The Board is sad that she is leaving and gives thanks to Mrs. Johnson for all her years as BOE Clerk.
MOTION CARRIES 6:0

h) *Appointment of Mrs. Brenda Desmarais, Board of Education Clerk*

K. Tolsdorf **MOVED**, C. Lent **SECONDED** to approve action item h as presented.
Mrs. Hoffman Welcomes Mrs. Desmarais.
MOTION CARRIES 6:0

i) *Approval of Snow Plowing Contract 2015/2016*

C. Lent **MOVED**, L. Napolitano **SECONDED** to approve snow plowing contract 2015/16

Mr. Fearon stated that we received two bids and that Wrana Excavation does a good job. Page two of Estimate received from Wrana Excavation needs to change "2014-2015 snow year" to 2015-2016.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

j) Approval of 2015/2016 ED099-Healthy Food Certification

K. Vertefeuille **MOVED**, L. Napolitano **SECONDED** to approve Healthy Food Certification
The Board would like update on Healthy Food Certification and alternatives.

MOTION CARRIES 5:1

C.Lent, K. Tolsdorf, K. Vertefeuille, K. Hoffman, Linette Dooley **VOTED FOR MOTION**
L. Napolitano **OPPOSED MOTION**

k) Approval of Records Disposal Authorization

K. Vertefeuille **MOVED**, C. Lent **SECONDED** to approve Records Disposal Authorization
MOTION CARRIES 6:0

l) Approval of Toshiba Copier 3-Year Contract

L. Napolitano **MOVED**, C. Lent **SECONDED** to approve Toshiba Copier 3-Year Contract
MOTION CARRIES 6:0

VII. New Business

- a) First Reading – Policy 6142.101-School Wellness*
- b) Notice of Tenure - Congratulations to:*
 - *Ms. Brooke Kleinman*
 - *Mrs. Lorraine McLeish*
 - *Dr. Lynn Rookey*
 - *Ms. Patricia Whitman*

VIII. Correspondence/Communications

- a. Staff List 2015/2016 – Presented to the Board.*

IX. Board of Education Subcommittees

- Future Meeting Dates:
 - July 14, 2015 – Negotiations, 6:00 p.m. H.W.P. LMC Back Classroom Area
 - July 23, 2015 – Negotiations, 6:00 p.m. H.W.P. LMC Back Classroom Area
 - August 3, 2015 – Regular Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m. H.W.P. Cafeteria
 - August 4, 2015 – Negotiations, 6:00 p.m. H.W.P. LMC Back Classroom Area
 - September 8, 2015 (Tuesday)– Building Walk Through – 6:30 p.m. Meet @ Main Entrance
 - September 8, 2015 (Tuesday) – New Hire & Teacher Tenure Reception, 7:00 p.m. LMC Conf. Room
 - September 8, 2015 (Tuesday) - Regular Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m. H.W.P. Cafeteria
 - September 10, 2015 H.W.P. PreK-8 Open House, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

X. Superintendent's Report

- a) New Legislation*

Mr. Fearon stated that NBR is being changed. Impact could be as much as 100,000.
Mr. Lent asked about the new special education legislation.
Mr. Fearon commented that will not have much impact on our day to day operations.
- b) Municipal Energy Plan*

Mr. Fearon stated that Eversource is partnering with Environmental Protection Agency. We can receive funds for the municipality and BOE. Need to log past 5 years and fill out spreadsheet, set goals for energy use. This may enable us to receive grants.
- c) Proposed Board of Education Retreat*

Board is interested and Mr. Fearon will look into places for early Fall 2015.

XI. Future Regular and Subcommittee Agenda Items (Tentative)

XII. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks

Board members commented on what a beautiful Yearbook. Thank you Ms. Lawton and Ms. Henry.

Big Thank You to the PTO for the Horace Porter Float in the parade.

Thank you to Kat MacDonald for the awesome books presented at the board meeting.

Great job on the Long Range Plans presented tonight. All efforts are appreciated.

XIII. Adjournment

K. Tolsdorf **MOVED**, and C. Lent **SECONDED** to adjourn the meeting at 9:47 p.m.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

Respectfully Submitted,

Karin Vertefeuille,
Columbia Board of Education Vice Chairperson