



Columbia Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes
October 4, 2010
7:30 P.M.
Horace W. Porter School Cafetorium

Board Members Present: Paula Belekewicz, Lisa Jurovaty-Vice Chairman, William Mulcahy, Lauren Perrotti-Verboven, Nelson Petrone-Chairman, John Schroder, James Thorn

Administration Present: Francine Coss-Superintendent

Others Present: Amy Raffa, Cheryl Hart, Carol Puckett, Laurie Rogers, Shawn Lawton, Sandy Mohammed, Christopher DelMastro, Daryl Brown, Geoff & Heidi Rockefeller, Kathleen Eaton-Robb, Brian Gozembiewski, Megan Duffy, Susan Boecker, Neil Swenson, Diane Schatz, Thomas & Maryann Potter, Fiona Fenteany, Gary Littlefield, John & Deb Merritt, Patricia Jenkins, Ann Robertson, Jessie Dupont, Carol Albert, Chris Lent, Allen Smith, Melissa Petrone, Steven Everett, Jeff & Lorraine Nalewajk, Karin Coughlin, Michelle Schroder, Tracy Champagne, Shirley Audet, Kaila Scanlon, Robert Ferrigno, Maureen DelGaudio, Chris Leger, Carol Coley, Felicia Acerbo and Sarah Acerbo, Babette Sternat, Brian Hurst, William Rood, Carolyn Godfrey, Bernie & Lucy Drabek, Chris & Sue Parker, Richard Jenkins, Beth Cheney, Jim Grasso, Joe Pardee, Theresa Cooper and Emelia Cooper, Lynnanne Kitchell, Lucinda Marsalisi, Rick Friedmann, Chris Dwyer

I. Call to Order

Nelson Petrone called the October 4, 2010 regular meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes - Take Action

A. September 20, 2010 Regular Meeting Minutes

P. Belekewicz **MOVED** and J. Thorn **SECONDED** to approve the September 20, 2010 regular meeting minutes as presented.

MOTION CARRIES: 6-0-1

P. Belekewicz, L. Jurovaty, L. Perrotti-Verboven, N. Petrone, J. Schroder, J. Thorn VOTED FOR THE MOTION
W. Mulcahy ABSTAINED

B. September 27, 2010 Special Meeting Minutes (Part 1)

L. Perrotti-Verboven **MOVED** and P. Belekewicz **SECONDED** to approve the September 27, 2010 part 1 special meeting minutes with the addition of II. Executive Session for the Purpose of Negotiations Discussion - *to approve the Columbia Teachers' Contract as presented "pending approval by the district attorney"*.

MOTION CARRIES: 7-0

C. September 27, 2010 Special Meeting Minutes (Part 2)

L. Jurovaty **MOVED** and J. Thorn **SECONDED** to approve the September 27, 2010 part 2 special meeting minutes as presented.

MOTION CARRIES: 7-0

IV. Overview of High School Choice Review

Mr. Petrone explained that about every five years, the Board looks at high school options for Columbia high school students. Beginning last May, eight schools/districts, both current and potential, were invited to make presentations to the Board. Bolton, Coventry, Lebanon, Norwich Free Academy, E.O. Smith High School and Windham each gave presentations. RHAM expressed an interest but does not have available space and Glastonbury declined due to their district policy not to accept tuition students. The Chairman thanked parents for their interest in Columbia's current and potential high school choices and asked for their comments.

V. Comments from the Audience (Bylaws of the Board #9300)

Time allotted for public participation—30 minutes, time allotted for an individual speaker—3 minutes

- **Theresa LaGassei** asked the Board to keep Bolton High School as an option.

- **Steven Everett** thinks it should be a priority to keep Bolton as a choice for Columbia students. BHS has far exceeded his expectations.
- **Amy Raffa** would like to add E.O. Smith as a high school choice and also see a presentation from Arts at the Capitol Theater Magnet School.
- **Kathleen Eaton-Robb** supports Bolton High School. Columbia students feel very welcome there and she is in favor of the school's high academic standards.
- **Carolyn Godfrey** is glad to hear the Board is in favor of BHS. She would like to keep Lyman High School.

Superintendent Coss explained the contract expiration dates to the audience: Bolton – through 2022, Lyman – through the end of this school year, Windham – through the 2014/2015 school year.

- **Jim Grasso** thinks Bolton is a good choice and is very excited about the possibility of adding E.O. Smith.
- **Beth Cheney** asked the Board to look at the Bolton lottery process because it is difficult for students and parents. She would like E.O. Smith to be added to Columbia's choices; it is a larger school with rich experiences.

Superintendent Coss explained the high school lottery process. Each contract has different criteria for the number of students accepted. Bolton will accept up to 12 grade 9 students. They have yet to take only 12, each year they have been able to accept more than that number. **Mrs. Belekwicz** explained when an older sibling already attends a designated high school, their interested younger sibling is automatically placed at the top of that school's lottery listing. Bolton's new building will be ready next fall and will have a capacity for 350 students.

- **Maryann Potter** supports E.O. Smith High School as it affords great opportunities and has a connection with UCONN. She thinks Bolton is a good choice but is not in favor of Windham High School.
- **Felicia Acerbo** supports Lyman but not Windham. She asks that the administration clarify to high school parents that when Horace Porter School has no school, the high school buses do not run. Parents must provide transportation for their high school students.
- **Carol Coley** has 2 children at Windham High School. WHS teachers are very helpful and communicate well to families. It has been a positive experience for both of her children. E.O. Smith is a good option. If Lyman is not a future option, a voag program will need to be offered. She asked the audience to be careful when looking at the high school data because it is for the whole school, not just Columbia students.
- **Charlene Petrone** supports E.O. Smith and Norwich Free Academy which is 20 minutes from her driveway. Transportation can be worked out. She works with a number of people whose children attend both E.O. Smith and NFA. They have nothing but positive things to say about both schools. Columbia is lucky to have options that fit each high school student.
- **Nancy Biardi** is in favor of more choices.
- **Eva Bulley** requests open choice for students allowing them to attend non-contracted high schools that parents will transport their children to. She supports E.O. Smith and NFA. She thanked every Board of Education member as well as the superintendent for serving the children of Columbia.
- **Richard Jenkins** is in favor of open choice whether transportation is provided or not. He would like this to start for the 2011/2012 school year.
- **Laurie Rogers** asked how many options will be allowed.

The **Superintendent** explained a big consideration is the cost associated with transportation to contracted designated high schools.

- **Gary Littlefield** is in favor of choice.
- **Megan Duffy** asked the Board to please keep working families and transportation to the schools they decide on in mind when making their decision.
- An unidentified citizen asked the Board to narrow down their selections to really good choices.
- **Brian Gozembiewski** is in favor of 2 choices: E.O. Smith and Bolton – one large and one small school.
- **Shawn Lawton** asked how many Columbia students E.O. Smith might accept.
- **Theresa Cooper** asked if students would be allowed to continue in a high school if that school is no longer under contract with Columbia. Also, currently Bolton allows only grade 9 students to enter into their high school. Will Bolton allow upper grade students to transfer to BHS?

Mrs. Coss explained there is a provision in each current designated high school contract that states once a student is enrolled with a high school, that student may finish out their career at that school. But once the contract expires, there is no guarantee Columbia students will be allowed to continue at that school. **Mr. Petrone** explained Bolton feels strongly that their high school students should start in 9th grade and not be transferred in as upper classmen.

- **Tracy Champagne** supports E.O. Smith and their voag program.
- **Shirley Audet** hopes those students already enrolled at Lyman will be allowed to finish. She asks that students not be allowed to attend the high school choice lottery meeting because it is difficult for them.
- **Al Smith** likes Bolton, E.O. Smith and Coventry and thinks we should get out of WHS ASAP because of the violence and low academic test scores.
- **Bill Rood** is a teacher in Windham and supports Coventry High School because it is a lot like Columbia. He does not want Windham as a choice.
- **Jessie Dupont** likes Windham. WHS gets our kids ready for the real world, like college. We shelter our kids in Columbia. Choices should stay open, matching kids to school. Windham has great teachers and structure.
- **Babette Sternat** has a 9th grader at WHS who is excelling. Her student loves the diversity that a lot of us are afraid of. Please keep Windham as a choice and give our kids credit to choose.
- **Fiona Fenteany** supports E.O. Smith. It is a great school and she is blown away by the opportunities.
- **Ann Robertson** hopes the Board will consider E.O. Smith as a high school option.
- **Brian Hurst** asks the Board to give enough options for what kids want and to look at the numbers.
- **Kerry Hoffman** asked the Board to add E.O. Smith as a contracted high school and consider a policy for Columbia that is similar to Brooklyn's open choice policy.
- **Carol Albert** asked that the Board allow kids to continue at Lyman.
- **Chris Lent** supports open choice and E.O. Smith. WHS is a failing school.
- **Carolyn Godfrey** would like 2 small and 2 large high schools to choose from.
- **Sarah Acerbo** is a 10th grade student at Lyman. She feels Bolton is too small, WHS has good diversity and it is easy to find a friend or group to fit in with but Lyman is a good fit for her.
- **Neil Swenson** feels it is not about a group as a whole but if it is a good fit for some of our kids, keep Lyman. If Lyman's contract does not continue please pursue a voag program.
- **Cheryl Hart** supports E.O. Smith and Bolton and would like to get away from the lottery process.
- **Emelia Cooper** is a 10th grade student at Lyman. She asked the Board to not count Lyman out. LHS is the middle of the road; not too small and not too large. It has been a good experience and she has met some great people.
- **Heidi Rockefeller** would like to see other options.
- **Diane Schatz** would like the Board to pursue E.O. Smith.
- **Theresa Cooper** asked if E.O. Smith might consider the transfer of upper classmen into their school.
- **Laurie Rogers** supports 3 choices plus open choice.
- **Lynnanne Kitchell** requests Columbia student stats rather than data for each entire high school.
- **Eva Bulley** asked for open choice and allowing parents to decide what is best for their children.
- An unidentified citizen asked what costs are associated with this.

Mrs. Coss explained regular and special education tuition, as well as transportation costs are associated with designated high school contracts. Open choice would cost the district tuition and the parent would be responsible for providing transportation for their student.

The Superintendent read e-mails from 5 parents:

1. Leslie Poulos – in favor of 3 choices
2. Bill Stover – in favor of 3 choices: Bolton, E.O. Smith and WHS
3. Ann Kellegger
4. Bridget Kaldy – in favor of adding E.O. Smith
5. Cheryl Munoz – in favor of E.O. Smith

Mr. Petrone thanked parents for their input and suggestions.

Michelle Schroder attended the open house. She filled out the PTO survey and listed her concern: her grade 6 student does not have a math text book. She would like to know when her child will get a book to use. **Mrs. Coss** explained all text book orders have been approved and ordered but she will look into this matter and get an answer for Mrs. Schroder.

VI. Correspondence/Communications/Information

- A. Superintendent Coss to Columbia Families – Notice of High School Discussion** *Board members praised Mrs. Coss for her great job informing parents of the meeting topic this evening. It is apparent by the good turnout.*
- B. 2010/2011 Horace W. Porter School Staff Directory**

VII. Financial Review

- A. Payment of Bills**
- B. Actual & Budgeted Expenses and Encumbrances** – 93% remains in the 2010/2011 Board of Education budget.

VIII. Reports/Discussion

- A. Board of Education Chairperson** – Mr. Petrone explained on Tuesday, October 12th the Board will meet at 6:00 p.m. to discuss the Board’s Mission and at 6:30 p.m. for high school option and action plan discussion.
- B. Board of Education Subcommittees**
- 1. September – December 2010 Meeting Date Schedule Draft**
- C. Superintendent’s Report**
- 1. Administrative Update**
 - 2. Porter Art Exhibit at CT Children’s Medical Center** – Mrs. Coss attended a wonderful reception on Friday, October 1st with Mrs. MacDonald and Porter students whose work is being displayed at the children’s hospital.

IX. Action Items/Discussion

- A. 2010/2011 Co-Curricular Appointment**
- B. Non-Certified Union Rep Appointment**

P. Belekewicz **MOVED** and J. Thorn **SECONDED** to appoint Mr. Michael Hetherington as Math Olympiad Coach with the salary of \$1,058 and Fayne Sears as Nurse Union Rep with the salary of \$500.

Mr. Thorn said it is difficult for one person to do a quality job if they are performing numerous co-curricular jobs. He asked the superintendent to look at these positions and the time it takes to fulfill them.

MOTION CARRIES: 7-0

X. Future Agenda Items

- High school lottery process
- Review sibling policy
- Discuss multiple siblings from one family
- Separate Columbia statistics from high school reports

XI. Board of Education Member Comments

Mrs. Perrotti-Verboven complimented Mrs. Coss on the nice high school presentation handouts prepared for this evening’s meeting.

XII. Executive Session for Pending Claims and Litigation Discussion (Suit by Lebanon Board of Education Against Columbia Board of Education Regarding High School Contract)

L. Jurovaty **MOVED** and J. Thorn **SECONDED** to enter into executive session for pending claims and litigation discussion (suit by Lebanon Board of Education against Columbia Board of Education regarding high school contract) at 9:15 p.m.

MOTION CARRIES: 7-0

P. Belekewicz **MOVED** and L. Jurovaty **SECONDED** to adjourn executive session at 9:45 p.m.

MOTION CARRIES: 7-0

XIII. Action Items/Discussion

- A. Lebanon Settlement Agreement and Release**

P. Belekewicz **MOVED** and J. Thorn **SECONDED** to approve the Lebanon Settlement Agreement and Release as presented.

MOTION CARRIES: 7-0

XIV. Adjournment

L. Jurovaty **MOVED** and L. Perrotti-Verboven **SECONDED** to adjourn the meeting at 9:46 p.m.

MOTION CARRIES: 7-0

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Jurovaty
Columbia Board of Education Vice-Chairperson