

BOARD OF EDUCATION

COLUMBIA, CONNECTICUT



The Columbia School District is a community of learners providing rigorous programs to ensure that each student can excel as an individual.

Christopher Lent, Chairman
Kathy Tolsdorf, Vice Chairperson
James Chakulski, Jr.
David Crim
Linette Dooley
Lisa Napolitano
Karin Vertefeuille
Laurence Fearon, Superintendent

Board of Education Minutes Regular Meeting May 1, 2017 Horace W. Porter School Cafetorium

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

Board Members Absent: James Chakulski

Others Present: Lol Fearon-Superintendent, Barbara Wilson-Director of Student Services, Alyssa Gwinnell- Principal, Michael Kenyon - Assistant Principal, Steve Piro, Sandy Rijs, Christine Sposito, Kelly DeForest, Tony Franco, Kara Bowen, Julie Rodriguez-Savino, Allison Cranick

I. **Call to Order** - Chairman C. Lent called the regular meeting to order at 7:43 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.

Kara Bowen expressed concern for the current third grade students entering grade 4 next year and for the teachers. She feels the current class size in third grade has been extremely difficult for her son and for the teachers. She would like to see 3 teachers maintained in grade 4 for next year.

Tony Franco has a third grader headed for fourth grade and was alarmed to hear there will be 2 teachers next year. With a class size of 23 per class we are over 50% of the State average for class size. He urged the Board to consider alternatives.

Christine Sposito expressed concern regarding the SRBI process. She would like to see more SRBI teachers to be able to invest in the needs of students and reduce special education needs in the future. She feels the current SRBI services provided are based on availability and not necessarily need.

IV. **Teacher Appreciation Day, Tuesday May 9, 2017**

The District seeks out and retains the most highly qualified administrators, teachers and staff.

We are proud and thankful of the commitment our teachers and para-educators make to the children and families of Columbia.

The BOE recognized and thanked the Teachers for their commitment and service to the District.

V. **Action Items (Consent)**

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 April 3, 2017 Regular Meeting Minutes*
- b) *Approval of April 5, 2017 Special Meeting Minutes*
- c) *Approval of Payment of Bills*

K. Tolsdorf MOVED, D. Crim SECONDED to approve the consent actions items A through C.
MOTION CARRIES 6:0.

VI. Discussion/Action Items

a) Approval of 3rd Quarter Expenditure Report

L. Napolitano MOVED, K. Vertefeuille SECONDED to approve the third quarter expenditures reflected in the expenditure report of 4/21/2017.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0.

K. Tolsdorf MOVED, K. Vertefeuille SECONDED, to authorize the Superintendent to make the necessary line item transfers in order to bring the budget into balance.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0.

b) Budget 2017/2018 – L. Napolitano asked what the health insurance cost increase is estimated at. L. Fearon responded the increase is at 10.8%.

Mr. Fearon reminded the audience the Town vote for the 2017-2018 Budget is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. at Yeoman's Hall.

Mr. Fearon explained the changes to the budget and the timeline. During budget planning (December-February) the BOE did not anticipate staffing changes and had requested an additional .5 technology teacher.

Kindergarten registration numbers began increasing between February and March. There are currently 45 students registered. The proposed budget was presented to FiPAC on March 15th. On March 15th FiPAC requested a reduction of \$50,000 to the proposed budget. Within days of the submission an increase of \$227,000 in special education costs was received.

The BOE adjusted the proposed budget to reflect a \$50,000 reduction and also included an increase of \$227,000. The initial budget proposal was an increase of 1.14% and is currently at 2.61%.

With the rising number of kindergartners and taking into consideration that Kindergarten Orientation has not occurred, a decision was made to increase the number of kindergarten teachers to 3 instead of 2.

There are 3 families with third grade students who are leaving the district over the summer. An intern will be placed in the fourth grade to work with groups of students as determined by the teachers. Specials such as art, music, physical education will also be broken down into 3 sections.

A.Gwinnell addressed the concern brought up regarding SRBI. She is confident 2.5 teachers are sufficient at this point. Both Mrs. Gwinnell and Mrs. Wilson have worked with staff to revamp the SRBI process.

Christine Sposito is concerned that Tier II support, which is provided by the classroom teacher, doesn't adequately address the level of need. She does not support student missing specials such as Spanish, technology and band in order to receive SRBI support.

Mrs. Gwinnell explained classroom teachers can be SRBI teachers. Tier II support is provided three times per week and still allows for students to attend specials such as Spanish, technology and band.

Tier III support is more intensive and does not allow as much flexibility.

B. Wilson said support offered by a student's classroom teacher is generally a better choice because the teacher knows the student best.

Mrs. Bowen said the current third grade class has up to 5 adults in the classroom at a time and she feels this is not working. Did the Board consider the option of placing an intern in kindergarten instead of grade 4?

Mr. Fearon said he takes great exception to the comment concerning 5 adults in the classroom not working. The classes are part of a co-teaching model and the model is working well. The Board supports small groups at early grades. He agrees 15-16 students in every level would be optimal but a responsible budget was

created which best meets the needs of the district. He noted the budget cannot be increased at this point in the process only decreased.

Allison Cranick noted interns are sometimes pulled from assignments as coverage is needed in other parts of the building.

Christine Sposito asked when parents should become involved in the budget process to express their concerns and support.

C. Lent said planning is ongoing in January and the budget is presented to FiPAC by March 15th. The BOE budget public hearing was held on February 27th.

VII. Report of the Future Needs Committee

- Demographics – No updates were noted.
- Finance/Budget – Clarification of the process and next steps were discussed. K. Tolsdorf asked what information she should be obtaining concerning costs.
Discussion concerning the option of pursuing 1 high school option or maintaining 2 and the cost implications of those choices were noted as the main question of the Future Needs Committee.
At this time the subcommittees are putting together facts so questions can be answered at public forums.
D. Crim noted it is the Board's job to do what reflects the needs of the community.
The Future Needs Committee will meet on May 22nd at 6:30 to discuss the results of the survey and look at the implications of pursuing a single high school and maintaining H.W. Porter programs. Public input is welcomed at the meeting.
- State Law and Regulations – No updates were provided.
- Survey and Open Forums - L. Fearon will be accompanying Mr. Doyle (Technology Coordinator) and three 8th grade students, Paige Lent, Baelen Kaufman and Justin Desautels to the Beckish Senior Center on May 9th. They will bring laptop computers and assist anyone who would like help completing the survey on-line. K. Tolsdorf would like the next survey to focus on what is valued at this school and what people are looking for.

VIII. Reports of Board Committees

- Policy – Statutory changes have been added to some policies and will be ready for a first reading at the next BOE meeting.
- Budget – Updated information was covered during the meeting.
- Teaching and Learning – no update was provided.
- Ad hoc Committee on Future Needs – The Committee will meet on May 22nd at 6:30 p.m. in the LMC Conference Room.

IX. Correspondence/Communications

- Willimantic Chronicle, April 22, 2017-“Despite her own battles, teen is driven to help others”
C. Lent commented that Daena is an inspiration to everyone and commended her desire to help others. She is a very special person to the community. The BOE is impressed with her fine character and thoughtfulness.
- Windham Tech Third Quarter Honor Roll
- E.O. Smith Third Quarter Honor Roll
K. Vertefeuille noted the number of high honor and honor roll students attending the high school programs. Bolton's honor roll was also included. Student success is a direct reflection of the programs here at H.W. Porter School.
L. Napolitano noted approximately 50% of Columbia freshman achieved honor roll.
Members offered congratulations for the students' success.

X. Board of Education Upcoming Meetings

- *Future Meeting Dates:*
 - May 16, 2017 – Annual Town Budget Meeting, 7:00 p.m., Yeoman's Hall
 - May 22, 2017 – Ad hoc Future Needs Committee, 6:30 p.m., H.W. Porter LMC Conference Room
 - June 5, 2017 – Policy Subcommittee Meeting, 6:30 p.m., HWP Library Media Center

- June 5, 2017 – Policy Subcommittee Meeting 7:00 p.m., HWP LMC
- June 5, 2017 – Regular BOE Meeting, 7:30 p.m., HWP Cafetorium
- Members plan to hold an executive session from 7:00-7:30 to review the initial phase of the Superintendents Evaluation.

XI. Superintendent's Report

- Update on State Budget Process – Mr. Fearon reports there are currently 3 budgets on the table – the Governor's Budget, Appropriations Committee and Republican budgets. The Appropriations and Republican budgets do not include teacher pensions costs passed on to the municipalities.. ECS has some reductions but special education grants are in place at this time.
- Update on Capital Plan Projects – Mr. Fearon reports there are 3 projects in the planning stages. Painting is a 5 year plan. F Wing painting is scheduled to begin this year. Voice Over IP – 3 providers have been screened. American Telephone installed the system at Town Hall and they seem to be the most competitive. A cabling upgrade is also under consideration. Window replacements and repair in the kindergarten rooms is also a priority. A company has been contacted who will repair and replace the windows. A modification of the plans for the stairs and balcony in the cafeteria has been requested. If the plans can be modified the cost will come in under \$40,000.

XI. Future Regular and Subcommittee Agenda Items (Tentative)

- a) *SBAC Testing*
- b) *Future Needs Committee*
- c) *Superintendent's Evaluation*

XII. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks

K. Vertefeuille noted we are approaching the 2 year anniversary of the Porter website. Part of the package included a refreshing of the site at no cost. Mrs. Gwinnell will follow up with ReVize.

XIII. Adjournment

D. Crim MOVED, L. Napolitano SECONDED to adjourn the meeting at 9:48 p.m.
MOTION CARRIES 6:0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Tolsdorf, Secretary/Chairperson