

Minutes
Board of Education Meeting
June 4, 2018
7:30 p.m.

Board Members Present: James Chakulski, Jr., David Crim, Linette Dooley, Chairman
Christopher Lent, Kathy Tolsdorf, Karin Vertefeuille

Board Member Absent: Gary Littlefield

Others Present: Lol Fearon-Superintendent, Alyssa Gwinnell-Principal, Barbara Wilson-Student Services Director, Beverly Ciurylo-Finance Director, Mark Walter-Town Administrator, Tom Boardman, Tom Cronin, Nicole Henry, Addie Kenney, Faith Kenney, Ryan Linares, Kristen Maltese, Jaymeson Morrison, Jeff Morrison, Heather Plourde, Kevin Quinn, Sandy Rijs, Henriette Sardi, Christine Sposito and Carmen Vance

I. Call to Order - Chairman Lent called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Change to the Agenda:

Chairman Lent MOVED, D. Crim SECONDED to move approval of May 7, 2018 Board of Education minutes from the Action Items (Consent) to Action Items (Discussion and Action).

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

Chairman Lent MOVED, D. Crim SECONDED to move Section VII Action Items (Discussion and Action) a. and b. to follow Section V Presentations.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

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

Carmen Vance, 1 Beach Road, said she understands the Board is considering hiring a part-time superintendent in place of a full-time superintendent. She is in full agreement with this proposal, saying now is the perfect time to try this as enrollment is down, we have only one school, and the district is doing well as a whole. Utilizing a part-time superintendent has been discussed over the years. She stated this is not a life and death decision and savings realized by hiring a part-time superintendent could be utilized elsewhere, i.e., purchases to support classroom instruction for the students. She says other towns have part-time superintendents and recommends trying this for at least a year or year-and-a-half. If it is determined to be unsuccessful, the Board could decide to revert to a full-time superintendent.

Christine Sposito, 62 Doubleday Road, said she did not know this was an action item for tonight's meeting. She asked where people may see a timeline or outline of month-to-month topics that get discussed. She has attended meetings in the past and made inquiries

or proposals, particularly budgetary concerns, only to hear a decision had been made at a previous meeting. Knowing in advance what is to be discussed at a meeting may allow parents to arrange childcare so they may attend.

Ms. Sposito stated she disagrees with the idea the district will continue to succeed with a part-time superintendent. It is not easy to go back to the town to say we need additional funds to reinstate our superintendent to full-time status. She believes this should not be considered a money savings step. Further, reducing the superintendent to part-time would mean others would be held responsible for tasks currently done by the superintendent. Building administrators already have a full plate and students would ultimately suffer. If there is data that supports use of a part-time superintendent, she would like to see or hear it.

Chairman Lent responded to Ms. Sposito's question of agendas and/or timing of processes. Tonight's agenda shows upcoming meetings. A complete listing of meetings is also on the district's website. Superintendent. Fearon confirmed Chairman Lent's statement that budget development occurs in the October/November timeframe. There are subcommittee meetings that are also included on the list of upcoming meetings. The public is welcome to attend the subcommittee meetings as well as the board meetings. Ms. Vertefeuille stated the board hears a summary of the subcommittee meeting. Finance Director Curylo reminded the attendees that public discussion is not permitted within the budget subcommittee meeting, but is within the board meeting.

Henriette Sardi, 74 Doubleday Road, stated she has three children who went through the Columbia school system when there was a part-time superintendent. The teachers were excellent and the children succeeded. She does not believe we need a full-time superintendent at this time, especially with enrollment being lower than it was when her children were in school. We should be willing to try something new. The budget is already established, so the cost savings could be used for the children or returned to the town. Ms. Sardi reiterated her support to reduce the superintendent position to part-time.

IV. Special Recognition – *Columbia students are encouraged to explore their creativity and the District values their individual contributions and commitment to excellence.*

Enrichment teacher Ms. Rijs stated the eighth annual Invention Convention took place on March 14, 2018. Seventeen inventors in grades 4 through 7 participated. Mrs. Gwinnell, Mr. Doyle, Mrs. Croteau and Mrs. Hilbie judged this very successful event.

a. Invention Convention Finalists

Jaymeson Morrison presented his winning entry, "The Shooe." Jaymeson was able to use, for his prototype, his great grandmother's old shoe, some Velcro and a sports band. It is to be worn over your indoor basketball or soccer shoes, easily removed upon entry to the building. This eliminates your need to change your shoes. Simply remove The Shooe and go play without harming the indoor floor!

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Addie Kenney presented her winning invention, “The Splasher Catcher.” Addie’s dog was the inspiration behind her invention. This water dish has a special rim affixed to it, saving a lot of water. Both her family and the dog like this invention.

Mila Covino also created a winning invention, “The Cupcake Car Seat.” Ms. Rijs shared with the group that Mila’s dog was instrumental in her invention. The Cupcake Car Seat helps you safely transport your baked goodies without fear of your dog getting into them along the way.

Ms. Rijs joined the Board in congratulating these winners and said she looks forward to seeing what the ninth annual Invention Convention brings.

b. Middle Level Scholar Leaders, Connecticut Association of Schools

Mr. Fearon said the winners of the CT Association of Schools Middle Level Scholar Leaders, Lilly Dudek and Nicholas Haddad, were unable to attend tonight because they were at a dinner with their families and Assistant Principal, Jennifer Hill for the Middle Level Scholars at the Aqua Turf. Mr. Fearon and the Board congratulated Lilly and Nicholas for their accomplishments.

V. Presentation

a. Food Services Contract Year 1 (Tom Cronin, Heather Plourde of EASTCONN)

Ms. Plourde stated this year’s participation has gone up six percent. Free and reduced participation rose fifteen percent. Currently eight to ten adults purchase a meal at school each day. She believes there will be an even larger increase in the participation rate this fall.

Ms. Plourde informed the Board there will be a new point of sale “Nutrikids” system in place. This is the same POS used by EASTCONN in other districts. There will be minimal change in the process used to purchase meals. Any balances on the existing system will be transferred to Nutrikids. A primary benefit of using Nutrikids is continuity throughout districts EASTCONN serves.

Mr. Cronin thanked Superintendent Fearon and the Board for the opportunity to work with the district. The efforts of the superintendent and Board allowed EASTCONN to successfully implement this program in a timely manner.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. said he heard good things about the program and is pleased with the six percent increase. He asked for clarification on the Nutrikids system. Ms. Plourde explained the advantage of switching to it would include her being able to access it from one server, along with other towns on the same system. It will also

allow her to process reports more efficiently. Nutrikids is compatible with PowerSchool.

Mr. Crim asked for participation rates. Ms. Plourde shared preliminary overall participation rates, stating she would like to run a report and provide complete numbers.

b. Teacher Leader Fellowship Program (Alyssa Gwinnell, Principal)

Ms. Gwinnell provided an introduction to this initiative. Approximately three years ago she sought teachers interested in joining a leadership group. The premise is how we are already leaders in the school and what changes can be made to improve collaboration and leadership initiatives. Six people are currently on the committee. They meet four – five times throughout the year on a voluntary basis before school. There have been great strides and tonight Ms. Maltese and Ms. Henry will share what they have been doing and what their goals are.

Ms. Maltese said so many of our staff have a lot to say and a lot to offer. The group is starting to get a better sense of what they want to complete. What leadership means and what it looks like has been a focus. A mission statement and goals are being worked on. A draft was provided to Board members.

They have attended Future Leader Teacher fellowship meetings at CCSU. This has been extremely helpful and insightful. The meetings at CCSU represent a large range of disciplines including interventionists and special services.

Ms. Maltese said they have gleaned many great ideas to bring back to their colleagues for consideration. One is the Wonder Wall. Students may put on the board what they wonder about. A student wondered how their eyeballs stayed in their head and another wondered how their skin stayed on. This gave the teacher knowledge as to what the children were interested in and was able to tailor teaching accordingly. Additionally, a kindergarten class is paired with a sixth grade class. A Wonder Wall in each would be another topic of discussion and interest for the two classes.

Ms. Henry stated this is an amazing school and the members of this group hope to learn ways to make it even more so. They are considering a name change from *Teacher* leadership because there are paraprofessionals and other staff who are natural leaders. Their skills are recognized and utilized in activities such as potluck meals which are excellent opportunities for the staff to come together and brainstorm.

An example touted by Ms. Rijs is the Panther's Lair, which is a reward students earn. This innovative idea does not include food and is something even the best-behaved students work to receive. The room is filled with donated items, including a pool table, air hockey table and iPad. Students earn time to use this space and it is very effective.

Ms. Vertefeuille said this sounds like a fantastic program and loves the proposed mission statement. She asked how the Board can be part of his program. The offer is appreciated and the group will consider how the Board may participate. In the meantime, Board members were asked if they would be part of a future Career Day or if they would like to come to school to share with a class their job. This is one way their leadership skills would be demonstrated.

VI. Action Items (Consent)

Ms. Vertefeuille MOVED, Ms. Tolsdorf SECONDED, to approve agenda items B, C, D and E.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

VII. Action Items (Discussion and Action)

a. Greenskies Proposal – Engineering Study and Revisions

Town Administrator Walter introduced Ryan Linares, who will address the proposal by Greenskies. Mr. Walter also stated this proposal will be presented to the Board of Selectmen tomorrow.

Mr. Linares said part of the process included hiring a structural engineer and electrical contractor to confirm the load capacity of the roof and that electric meter at the school can handle the additional energy coming in. An in-depth energy review was done by a third party to ensure neutrality. A majority of the results are favorable.. We are able to proceed with the project with some minor changes to the proposal.

The original proposal was for 306-308KW system on the roof. The assessment shows that two locations on the southern part of the building cannot accommodate the weight of these units and two feet of snow. Therefore, it was decided to remove these from the proposal. Results of another area resulted in removal of a unit in that location.

To make sure the meter remained intact and Greenskies didn't have to continually to have it get back on, the electrical engineer decided to step down by about 50KW. This avoids all areas with structural concerns. Price per KWH did not change, \$0.052.

Mr. Linares is aware there is a new LED lighting process now under contract for the school. This is good news because new LED increases savings. He is not familiar with the company awarded the LED lighting contract, but is aware of the contract itself. Substantial savings will be realized with solar, LED lighting, and the 25 year term. \$19,000-\$20,000 per year savings could result in \$1.1 million savings from energy.

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Chairman Lent and Superintendent Fearon agreed the savings estimated in the LED contract are conservative. The dimming feature will increase savings.

Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Mr. Chakulski Jr. SECONDED, to send revised Greenskies proposal to the Board of Selectmen for approval.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

b. Approval of May 7, 2018 Board of Education Minutes

Mr. Crim MOVED, Ms. Tolsdorf SECONDED, to approve minutes of May 7, 2018 meeting.

Ms. Vertefeuille asks that we confirm item 6b. She does not believe she made the motion on that item because she voted against it. Chairman Lent agrees it should be double-checked, but believes Ms. Vertefeuille made the motion to then start the discussion.

Ms. Vertefeuille MOVED, Mr. Chakulski, Jr. SECONDED, to table approval of the May 7, 2018 Board of Education minutes for further review.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

VIII. Reports of Board Committees

Policy

No update at this time.

Budget

No update at this time.

Teaching and Learning

Ms. Tolsdorf stated the committee met earlier today. She asked if it would be possible to hold a curriculum meeting in the next few months. We have new curriculum and at some point she would like the Board to be updated. Superintendent Fearon agrees this is appropriate.

Ad Hoc Committee on Future Needs

No update at this time.

Search Committee Update

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Chairman Lent said the search committee consists of the seven Board of Education members and they have met three times to date. A search consultant, Mary Broderick, was hired via CABA. The search committee will go into a confidential setting and come back to speak regarding possible action regarding the superintendent's position. Upon their return the usual business agenda will resume.

Ms. Tolsdorf MOVED, Ms. Vertefeuille SECONDED, to convene a non-meeting for personnel issues for superintendent.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

Meeting recessed at 8:54 p.m. and resumed 9:44 p.m.

Chairman Lent provided a quick summary of the hiring of a new superintendent process in general. The Board of Education's seven members and hiring consultant Mary Broderick comprise the superintendent search committee. They looked at studies using a part-time superintendent. Key questions were derived from the data provided. The Board takes into account their vision of the district five years and beyond. Chairman Lent said they looked at the pros and cons. Some duties or aspects of the superintendent's position might not get the attention a full-time superintendent would give.

The Board spent two meetings with the search consultant. Chairman Lent stated he is satisfied the Board was thorough in their review and discussion and he supports a full-time superintendent for the district.

Ms. Vertefeuille asked Chairman Lent to clarify his reasoning further. Chairman Lent stated the three other administrators in district already have a full complement of responsibilities. It is not feasible to expect them to be responsible for the duties that would need to be covered because of hiring a part-time superintendent.

Student Services Director Barbara Wilson is responsible for all special education cases in district as well as attending all PPT meetings of our students attending any of the three area high schools. Principal Alyssa Gwinnell manages building operations and a long list of responsibilities. Assistant Principal Jennifer Hill serves in this capacity .6 FTE where she is responsible for transportation and Section 504 cases at the elementary level. The remaining .4 FTE of her position is as data coordinator.

Ms. Vertefeuille MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED, to fill superintendent position as full-time position for 2018-19 and beyond.

Ms. Vertefeuille started discussion with the fact that Columbia is a small town. That does not affect the responsibilities of the superintendent. There are the same issues in terms of keeping up with state and federal mandates, maintaining the relationship with local boards and matters within the elementary and high schools. Ms. Vertefeuille acknowledged many in the community may not fully realize the current duties and responsibilities of the administrators. Adding responsibilities to them means some things

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will not be done as well as they are now. She does not want to lose the present level of performance. She supports the recommendation to hire a full-time superintendent.

Mr. Crim indicated his agreement with Ms. Vertefeuille's summation.

Ms. Tolsdorf stated she was interested in pursuing a part-time superintendent. She believes current administrators are well-versed in their positions and can continue to do well with a part-time superintendent. Last year some budget cuts occurred and she feels such a situation could be avoided this year if the superintendent's position were reduced. There is evidence part-time could be successful. This opportunity does not present itself often and she believes we could save a substantial amount of money over 10 to 20 years.

Chairman Lent said future planning is important. He does not believe this is a good time for us to go part-time. Long-range planning of high school choice is underway.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. said that he feels members get a better perspective of responsibilities and duties by being on the Board. He would hate to see services and attention diminish. There has been a lot of good discussion regarding the pros and cons. He feels a full-time superintendent continues to be best for the district.

Ms. Dooley concurs. She is a proponent of full-time. This is not the right time to go part-time. Future needs and high school choice will be impacted. She believes the impact of reducing the superintendent position to part-time may not be felt for a year or two, but it would take much longer to recover afterward.

Ms. Vertefeuille MOVED, Mr. Crim SECONDED, to fill the superintendent position as full-time position for 2018-19 school year and beyond with the search committee.

MOTION CARRIES 5:1

James Chakulski, Jr., David Crim, Linette Dooley, Chairman Christopher Lent and Karin Vertefeuille voted FOR THE MOTION

Kathy Tolsdorf voted AGAINST THE MOTION

IX. Correspondence/Communications

There is no correspondence/communications to share at this time.

X. Board of Education Upcoming Meetings

a. Future Meeting Dates:

- June 11, 2018, Monday, 5:30 pm, AFSME Negotiations, H.W. Porter Library Media Center
- June 14, 2018, Thursday, 6:00-7:00 pm, Superintendent Search Public Forum, H.W. Porter Cafetorium
- June 21, 2018, Thursday, 5:30 pm, AFSME Negotiations, H.W. Porter Library Media Center

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- June 22, 2018, Friday, 4:00 pm, 8th Grade Graduation, E.O. Smith Auditorium
- July 9, 2018, Monday, 6:30 pm, BOE Subcommittee Meetings, Teaching and Learning and Budget
- July 9, 2018, Monday, 7:30 pm, BOE Regular Meeting, H.W. Porter Cafetorium
- July 30, 2018, Monday, 5:30 pm, AFSME Negotiations, Library Media Center

XI. Superintendent's Report

There is no update at this time.

XII. Future Regular and Subcommittee Agenda Items

a. Superintendent's Evaluation

Chairman Lent stated we are approaching the annual and final evaluation of Superintendent Fearon. Chairman Lent will send out the evaluation form to Board members within the next few days. Members were invited to assist in tallying the results. Superintendent evaluation will be ready for the meeting on July 9.

XIII. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks

Mr. Lent informed the group he received the annual renewal packet from CABE. Discussion regarding the Board's decision to table the decision to continue CABE's membership or utilize Shipman and Goodwin's policies ensued. It was agreed the cost would be comparable to both continue CABE membership so as to be able to participate in professional development sessions, when possible, *and* subscribe to receive Shipman and Goodwin's policies. Superintendent Fearon stated he would contact Shipman and Goodwin and prepare the necessary purchase order.

Ms. Dooley asked if there was response from the out of town family who requested to attend Porter School as a tuition student. Superintendent Fearon answered yes, and the family declined because the cost was too high for them.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. stated he attended a talent show at Bolton High School the night before. Of the eight acts, four were from Columbia. Three sang and the fourth sang and played the ukulele.

Ms. Vertefeuille went to an awards reception at E.O. Smith High School. Several Columbia students were recipients of awards.

There was much discussion regarding the overall talent of students from Columbia and the pride they instill.

XIV. Adjournment

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Ms. Dooley MOVED, Ms. Tolsdorf SECONDED to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 p.m.
MOTION CARRIES 7:0

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Tolsdorf, Vice Chairperson/Secretary