

MINUTES OF THE CORNWALL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2010 AT 5:00 P.M. AT
CORNWALL CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL

Board members present were: Becky Hurlburt, Phil Hart, Irene Hurlburt, Wynne Kavanagh, Thomas K. Levine, and Rachel Matsudaira. Others present were: Patricia Chamberlain, Superintendent of Schools; Robert Vaughan, Principal; approximately a dozen CCS parents; and two members of the press.

Mrs. Hurlburt called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

On a motion by Mr. Hart, seconded by Mrs. Matsudaira, the minutes of the January 21st meeting were approved with the following correction: (Page 2, Old Business c) ...~~He had asked school secretary Patty Rovezzi to~~ contacted schools in the Region to determine how they deal with front door security.... The minutes for the January 29th special meeting were approved with the following addition: (second motion) ... health insurance for February as a bridge towards finding other insurance coverage...

Correspondence and Communications to the Board:

Mrs. B. Hurlburt read a note from Carla Whiteside thanking them for their consideration regarding her health insurance.

Mr. Vaughan read a letter from Dr. Anna Timell in which she donated her stipend as school physician to a new fund called "Our Children Are Our Future," to be overseen by school nurse Martha Bruehl.

Regarding security at the front door, CCS parent Bridget Lynch said that since a problem hasn't been identified, a solution is nebulous. It was suggested that the school is actually less secure when someone is buzzed in. It was suggested that a "crazy" person who wants to get into the school to inflict harm will find a way to get in. They would not be worried about their physical safety. The concern was that a security system creates an atmosphere of fear.

Comments from CCS parents and a former student: Peter Busby indicated that there is potential danger in the sports programs as well as from a dangerous person entering the school, and that the town's money ought to be spent on education. Robert Budny spoke about "the dignity of risk," stating that one can't measure alarm system success, that security systems in schools are not a foreign idea, and that the thousands of students in thousands of schools in the United States children don't live in fear. Debra Morehouse said that money could be spent in better ways, and her son Dylan, a 2006 CCS graduate said that he always felt totally safe in the school and that there is a level of trust in the school community. Lib Tobin-Terrall spoke to the marketing of security systems to schools with companies focusing on fear to sell a product. She thinks that Mr. Vaughan's prior proposal to install a "motion sensor" was adequate. Mark Hampson stated that a simple buzzer at the front door does no actual good in preventing potential violence. A locked door could deter someone from committing an act of violence. He urged people to not confuse fear with change. Stacey Marcin, speaking for a group of parents, stated that the issue raised was not so much to address a glaring problem, but that children are simply not in as safe an environment as they could be. Many parents feel uncomfortable with the openness of the current system and signs at the door are no protection. While

acknowledging that a buzz-in system is no guarantee of complete safety, these parents are seeking “best practice” and another layer of security.

There was no report from the Board of Finance.

Standing Building Committee – Members of the committee are Mr. Hart, Mr. Vaughan, Peter Selino, and Jim Terrall. Susan Gingert will attend meetings to record discussion.

On a motion by Mrs. Kavanagh, seconded by Mr. Levine, the Board, on the recommendation of the principal, agreed to hire a temporary paraprofessional to work with a student on a one-on-one basis from March through June, 2010.

Mr. Hart reported that the Region One Board approved early retirement packages for six staff members. The budget currently stands at a 2.3% overall increase. A group of music students is heading to Florida over the April vacation, while the Robotics Team will compete in Worcester, Mass. and Hartford. A Freshmen Intervention advisory group made up of volunteer teachers was created as a component of career guidance at the high school.

(Mr. Vaughan left to emcee the middle school boys’ championship basketball game at the high school.)

Ms. Chamberlain – Superintendent’s Report

- Most Region One schools are in the AlertNow (rapid alert) system
- CABA is hosting A Day on the Hill, a legislative network program for school boards, superintendents, PTA members, students and guests, on March 3, 2010 in Hartford.
- A bill proposing the installation of seatbelts on school buses is being developed.
- A survey has been sent to parents of summer school students regarding the feasibility of the program if transportation was not provided.

Principal’s Report

- The CCS Girls Basketball was undefeated this year and they are the Region One Champions!

Old Business

- a) The Budget will be on the agenda of a Special Meeting to be held at 8:30 a.m. on March 1st, in the CCS Gathering Room.
- b) Front Door Security – the Board requested that Mr. Vaughan bring a new proposal to the March 1st meeting regarding security. The principal and the Board must decide if they want security (locked door or buzzer) and then figure out how to make it work. Mrs. Matsudaira clarified that whatever is decided would not be a financial burden to the school or town. There are capital funds available as well as possible grants.

Additional Comments

Reporter Karen Bartomioli urged Board members to review the seatbelt issue carefully, stating that there are reasons why seatbelts have not been required in buses. Ms. Chamberlain will be looking into bus safety.

On a motion by Mr. Levine, seconded by Mrs. I. Hurlburt, the Board adjourned to executive session at 6:35 p.m. to discuss a personnel issue. Ms. Chamberlain was invited to attend, as well as Mr. Vaughan (upon his return).

(Mr. Vaughan returned – to executive session)

The Board came out of executive session at 7:28 p.m. No action was taken.

The regular meeting was adjourned at 7:29 p.m.

Susan Gingert
Board Clerk