
Superintendent, School Committee Grateful

Teachers, SRP took pay cuts to save programs

Some extracurricular activities spared from chopping block in Coventry

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COVENTRY — Three days after the committee meeting, Coventry School Superintendent Dr. Mike Almeida was pleased that members of the school committee endorsed his recommendation of one-time infused revenue recommendations totaling \$340,000 including middle school and high school clubs (\$55,000), middle school activities (\$51,460), and junior varsity athletics (\$45,000). Funding for JROTC is \$220,000

but that program is waiting on confirmation of an identified funding source.

The remaining balance is \$34,337 for those items, not counting the JROTC.

The plan is to purchase textbooks for \$250,000 and have personnel development at \$60,000, both at one-year funding.

While these two items aren't paid for with just that balance, other funding sources are being considered. Some may be deferred until fiscal year 2016.

This after the school committee voted unanimously to bring back some positions after a new contract was negotiated with the Coventry Teachers' Alliance.

"There's been a lot of debate and discussion and my team has been very committed to prioritizing and over the last week I've seen a very concerted effort between the town council and school committee working together in a very collaborative manner and I'm looking forward to that continuing," Almeida said.

According to Kelly Erinakes, high

school teacher and president of the Coventry Teachers' Alliance, negotiations included teachers giving back 1.25 percent of their salary and the SRP giving back 1.75 percent of their salary. She said that total is what enabled the programs to stay.

Other pieces of the contract included teacher increased healthcare co-pays, changes to seniority and additional professional development days.

"For all this, I am pleased, but I am also irritated with the town for level-funding the school so next year we'll

be in the same exact position," she said. "It's a frustrating cycle."

Almeida said he understands that the funding is for a year but he hopes that will provide some time to find revenue sources for those programs to continue and others that didn't come back to get a chance.

"I certainly know without the revenue source they'll be reviewed, but at the very least it's a year that gives us more leverage," he said.

According to the superintendent,

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over the past six weeks, the district has sought more private donations, negotiated contracts and saved \$1.1 million for the taxpayers.

At the conclusion of Tuesday's meeting, held at the high school with a small turnout, Coventry School Committee Chairwoman Kathy Patenaude said she believes in the administration will lead the school in a positive direction.

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— Kathy Patenaude
Coventry School Committee Chair

support," she said.

Patenaude said when she began on the committee a decade ago, her first consideration was academics.

"I was under the impression that that's all that really mattered but over the years, I have changed my opinion and I now believe other things in the school make a big difference

as well," she said. "To let ROTC go would've been so bad and I'm truly grateful that the negotiations were able to come up with a contract."

Committee members Ann Dickson and Dave Florio expressed thanks to Coventry Teachers' Alliance President Erinakes for assisting in the negotiations that got them to

that point.

Dickson said from this point on, the district needs to move forward and be respectful of each other and give 110 percent to the kids because that's critical to their success.

Florio said over the last few months, he's spent time listening to both students' and parents' concerns regarding everything going on in the school district.

"It was so upsetting to me to see all this going on and I want to thank Kelly and her team that came forward with this proposal to save the school system and I hope next year we can do a lot more."