



**TEMPORARY REGIONAL SCHOOL STUDY COMMITTEE
OF
THE CITY OF ANSONIA
AND
THE CITY OF DERBY**



MINUTES

Wednesday, April 27, 2020 – 7 p.m.

ZOOM virtual conferencing platform via the Internet

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. by Co-Chair Jim Gildea. All those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Derby members:		Ansonia members:	
Jim Gildea, Co-Chair	present	Joe Jaumann, Co-Chair	present
Barbara DeGennaro	absent	Dr. Steve Adamowski	present
Tara Hyder	present	Rich Bshara	present
George Kurtyka	present	Christopher Phipps	present
Ron Luneau	present	Dr. Joshua Shuart	present

NVCOG Staff Rick Dunne and John DiCarlo were present.

Dr. Conway, Derby Public Schools and Dr. DiBacco, Ansonia Public Schools were present.

Public Session

No members of the public addressed the Committee this evening.

Treasurer's Report

Dr. Adamowski reported that there is no Treasurer's Report and there have been no expenditures since the last report.

Final Report Discussion – Rick Dunne, NVCOG

Mr. Gildea noted that at the conclusion of the last meeting, the Committee felt as if the report was missing some key areas in the manner of equalization and the program of studies. Mr. Dunne and Mr. DiCarlo discussed their concerns regarding the deliverables versus what was in the scope of services, and the invoices connected with those. Mr. Dunne is not comfortable with DMG's offer at this point in terms of completing the work as is required.

Jim Gildea, Co-Chair

Joe Jaumann, Co-Chair

Dr. Steven Adamowski, Treasurer

George Kurtyka, Secretary

Rich Bshara

Barbara DeGennaro

Tara Hyder

Ronald Luneau, Jr.

Chris Phipps

Joshua Shuart

There is \$137,000 reserved for the project, and NVCOG has paid out \$53,900. DMG has delivered quite a bit of work, but it lacks the detail of the work that the Committee is obligated to file to the residents of the two cities. DMG has offered to fill that in but wants to charge approximately \$4,200 per day to meet in person. Mr. Dunne asked the Committee how they would like him to proceed.

Mr. Gildea explained that he participated in several conversations with DMG, and he believes they were close to being able to define costs for both towns, although that never made it to the final report. He felt the program of studies was a more complicated discussion. There is enough missing there that their offer to meet twice for free, and then anything after that was \$1,400 per person for a Zoom meeting – is not reasonable.

He continued, he feels the program of studies was clear, what they needed to deliver was clear in the contract, clear in the statute, and he feels there is more work to be done in the program of studies.

Mr. Jaumann read, “In order to complete the work required, DMG will facilitate one Zoom meeting focused on equalization and two Zoom meetings with the District Leaders to help facilitate defining future education plans. If you wish to add additional meetings to the contract...” and then he goes on to explain the costs of those Zoom meetings.

Mr. DiCarlo pointed out that the contract specifies two meetings with District Leaders.

Mr. Jaumann is also concerned that they’re trying to charge for additional meetings, but more so than that, the meetings with the “District Leaders” were supposed to have taken place quite some time ago, before the report was even completed. He feels they’re trying to get information that they should have gotten the first time around to bring the report to where it should be. He believes the equalization needs more work. For the school plans the Committee will be relying more on the District Leaders in both communities to add a lot to what the curriculum would be.

Mr. Dunne felt that the primary consultant did not put in a lot of in-person effort with the Committee. Getting to equalization costs, that is relatively simple to put forward as long as they put together some equations and backup for how they arrived at certain numbers. But regarding the educational plans, essentially what they’re saying is they’ll participate in meetings of the existing district education officials to alter or refine the plan, but the current leadership teams have to come up with the specific level of detail to put in front of the people. He feels it seems that quite a bit is being offloaded onto current professional ed staff in the towns for the Committee.

Mr. Gildea noted that the consultant was in the districts numerous times, and should have gotten their information while they were here. Having to pay anything additional for them not capitalizing on the time they were here is a problem.

Mr. Dunne explained, paying the direct costs of them being here is not an issue for us, but he feels DMG owes the Committee the time. To charge a large number for time is not reasonable.

Ms. Hyder expressed her dissatisfaction regarding Page 8 of Task 2, it talks about economies of scale. It says the districts could save if they combine, negotiate or produce together... and says, we assume you can save about 10 percent if you do bulk purchasing. That would be about \$140,000. She feels that kind of information in terms of potential savings needs to be more tangible. Regardless of who does the work, she would like to see more tangible information.

Mr. Kurtyka expressed his concerns about defining the educational plan.

Mr. Gildea noted that it is the consensus of the Committee that we don't feel the report is complete, they have more work to do, and we would recommend that Mr. Dunne go back to DMG and tell them to finish the report.

Dr. Adamowski noted that in terms of the equalization, he thinks that is technical work we need to depend on them to do and should insist they complete those parts. He believes the Committee needs to play a larger role along with the respective Superintendents regarding the educational plan. He recalled from the last meeting that there were a couple of areas where the Committee needed to make decisions before they could complete their work.

Mr. Gildea explained that there were competing thoughts – one was to focus in on regionalization grades, and the other was the program of studies was vital to drive the decision as to what grades to regionalize. Ultimately that is what the Committee chose.

Dr. Adamowski agreed and suggested taking advantage of the offer of the two meetings.

Mr. Phipps added that he doesn't think we can go forward without the input of the Superintendent and Curricular Directors for both districts. This is where we need to get hands on, especially with the educators, outside of this Committee.

Mr. Gildea stated, they talked about joining two planning meetings by Zoom with District Leaders. He is assuming that District Leaders mean Superintendents.

Mr. Phipps is concerned whether two Zoom meetings will be enough to do that.

Mr. Gildea agreed that it should take as many meetings as are necessary to complete the work.

Ms. Hyder expressed her concern that it will be a massive amount of work for the Superintendents on top of their already massive jobs. You can't really build a school district in two meetings. She asked if it is reasonable to ask that team to do that work and believes it will take a very long time and be very complex. She feels it is not arbitrary or easy.

Mr. Gildea agreed and feels it is important to be sure that if we get to the point of a regional school district, they would have some flexibility in the course offerings. They would be

consulting with the leaders to set the agenda in the direction we want to go, not necessarily with all of the specifics laid out. That is what you would expect from that new board in preparing for that.

Mr. Jaumann agreed and doesn't believe two meetings will get that done. He also feels that it is important to set the agenda and get the weigh-in and direction.

In response to a question from Dr. Shuart, Mr. Dunne stated, the first two meetings are about curriculum development for a proposed school district. We have to have a meeting to figure out what we agree is going to be done, and the terms under which they're going to perform the work, or not. Once this Board decides what you really want for each of the disputed points – the shared services, combined curriculum to go to referendum, equalization of capital investment between the districts - if you decide what are acceptable outcomes for those areas, then we then go back. We've been holding back about having the next meeting with the consultant until we could hear from the Committee. Following this, if the Committee could compile a position on each of these three, we will go back and meet with the consultant.

We have a situation where they have delivered some work. It is questionable whether we paid them for all the work they've delivered, or if we paid them less or more. But the option we have to be prepared to take once we sit down, we have to have an option of completing the study by another means. Otherwise, we have no bargaining. That is how we need to approach this, once we have ordering and direction from the Committee on the specifics of what you want out of the contract.

Mr. Gildea agreed with Mr. Dunne's assessment of the meeting. He believes that the equalization is a little bit closer. Regarding the programming piece of it, he never anticipated it had to be every single specific class, 8-12, but it needs to be more than "here's what Ansonia offers," "here's what Derby offers," and you're going to get a combination of those. It has to be more than that. While he doesn't want to burden the Superintendents, there is an offer here for them to facilitate some meetings and try to move the ball forward. He is in favor of that, but wants to be clear with them that the Committee should not have to pay any additional expenses until the study is done.

Mr. Bshara asked, the increase in expenses for the extra meetings, is that over and above the full contract price being paid? And, if we proceed, will they assume that they're going to be paid the balance up to the \$137,000?

Mr. Gildea understood it to mean above the contract price, that they're pretty clear that they feel that they've met the burden of meeting with us, and therefore, they feel they're giving us a gift – they're doing a little work for us by doing the two meetings with the educators and anything after that, I think they're looking for money on top of their contract.

Mr. Dunne explained that he has been clear with DMG that we would not proceed with them doing additional work unless it was authorized. Anything outside of the scope of the contract

has to be in writing. We're in a negotiation phase with them again to try to resolve our dispute over their obligation to deliver on this contract. Once we come out of that negotiation, we'll either have an agreement, and that agreement could potentially involve paying them more money for certain things if we thought that it was reasonably unanticipated at the time of negotiation. I don't have trouble if they come and facilitate additional public meetings here, and they're going to come in person. I don't have a problem with their direct costs; but I do have a problem of what amounts to \$3,000 a day for their time to be here. They've got an obligation to the contract.

Mr. Gildea stated, I think that they get the fact that they have to do a little more work; I think they want to get paid first, for having done it. We've been idle for a while; I think we should move the ball forward. The Committee agrees the report is incomplete and we'd like to do additional work here. It would be helpful for Rick to know that we're all on the same page so that when he goes back to DMG we are speaking as a unified body.

In response to a concern of Mr. Bshara, Mr. Dunne explained, the COG drafted the terms and conditions of the contract. What they agreed to were favorable to us, particularly with respect to disputes and adjudication of those disputes. They need to understand what they've delivered is unacceptable; they will have to do more in terms of completing this report in order to get paid the contract amount.

TRSSC Next Steps

In response to several questions of the Committee members, Mr. Dunne summarized, there were a certain number of meetings outlined in the agreement, so we are in dispute as to whether they met that requirement. They were supposed to be here in person for more meetings with the Committee and work through these issues with the Committee. I observed two of their online meetings that they're considering to be the required meetings under the contract. They were impossible to follow and not productive at all. Adding to that, they've had trouble maintaining professional staff, so they're short-handed. They also have already engaged the consultant who would have done the capital cost equalization analysis, Silver-Petrucelli. They were the ones working on the planning and programming of the facilities. They probably owe them a lot of money that we haven't paid, and they probably need to go back to them to get that work completed. I think they're reluctant to get their sub-consultants doing more work. They do want to complete it, but they want to negotiate. Once these issues are resolved in terms of where the Committee wants us to be, I still have to go through the rest of the contract and match up the exact deliverables with the exact obligation. I think there are meetings they have to come back to – two or three public meetings are contemplated under other tasks in this contract.

After tonight's meeting, the Committee Chairs can give me a memo telling me what's going to be acceptable in terms of the deliverable on the report. I'll set about negotiating from there and have your co-Chairs invited to those meetings as well. I anticipate they will be online. John

and I will go through it. Our best situation is to have this consultant complete this report in a way that is acceptable to us.

Mr. Gildea believes that their e-mail, their communication to us will get us there. I think the deliverables they laid out in the April 14 e-mail are fair and reasonable to get us there. I just don't think we should have to pay.

Mr. Jaumann added, they want to claim that they've completed the three in-person meetings and I think by virtue of the fact that they have to double-back on the educational plan aspect of it shows that the two meetings that they had in person were not thorough enough to get the job done.

Ms. Hyder agreed that the Committee needs to hold them to what the contract says, with no additional money. She feels it should not be limited to two more meetings – just do the job, do it correctly, and then you'll get paid.

Mr. Dunne explained that they have to work with you to come up with your recommendation.

Mr. Bshara stated, we don't have that recommendation yet and it sounds like we want to see all the data before we make the recommendation.

Rick – they don't have to deliver every different version or every conceivable option; they have to work with you, run through numbers for each of the versions you can get to a point where they are writing the report for the recommendation the Committee is in agreement. Whatever information you need to get to that point, they have to provide it.

Mr. Gildea asked if there was consensus of this Committee of trying to move the ball forward, trying to complete the report, trying to continue to move forward on deliverables and hold the line on the additional funding, or if anyone had a different mindset.

Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments will go back and meet with DMG per tonight's discussions.

Mr. Dunne asked for more direction from the Committee about what will be acceptable regarding the shared services. Ms. Hyder reiterated her earlier comments regarding requiring more analysis. She feels if this is the biggest area where savings is realized, it needs to be specific and more tangible and not a guess of an "approximate 10 percent totaling \$140,000." She would like to see specifically where those savings would be, some line items and figures.

Dr. Adamowski asked, while the board of the regional district would have the responsibility for a detailed program of study, I do believe we have to submit a general budget with the proposal, is that correct?

Mr. DiCarlo stated, if you look at the statute, "detailed educational and budget plans for at least a five-year period including projection of enrollments, staff needs, deployment and description

of all programs and supportive services plan for the proposed regional school district.” They are supposed to provide this for the Committee; it’s part of their contract.

Dr. Adamowski suggested that at the next meeting the Committee should set some parameters for the educational program that can be translated into a budget for the first year of operation, and then projected forward for five years. We should start talking about the program of study at the next meeting, set some parameters for it, how we feel it might be enhanced, what could be attractive in a regional district. In a way that it would generate a general budget figure that could be projected in order to meet that aspect of the requirement.

Mr. Dunne agreed that the Committee needs to have involvement in developing a curriculum. The consultant’s job is to lead the Committee through that process and generate the report. They’re supposed to be working with you to do this, not leaving you out on your own to figure out a course curriculum, bring it back to us, we’ll put it in our report and then we’ll charge you for it. Their job is to walk you through this process; to facilitate it.

Mr. Gildea believes the educational consultants should meet with the educational leaders. They should be reporting back to us. To me the next steps are meeting with DMG, taking the Committee’s feedback on equalization on program studies, adding in Committee Member Hyder’s thought process on the savings from shared services, and get back on course.

Mr. Jaumann stated, we have five different plans in front of us, we’re not asking for five different analyses in five different ways, written in five different languages. If you gave us an elementary school curriculum, a middle school curriculum and a high school curriculum, they blend into each one, and you can do a budget for each one of those as well under the various different circumstances and if you need to know how much we’re talking about, you add them together. We’re really talking about doing one piece of work and being able to crunch those numbers and put all that information together in various different forms to assume various different shapes. That is what we’re missing here. I understand the Committee is obligated to provide certain information and steer the ship to a certain degree, we need that basic information. At least we’ll have a structure to talk about.

Mr. Gildea concluded, it sounds like the Committee is united on the next steps. We’ll keep on course with the scheduled May meetings.

Point of Good Order

Mr. Dunne stated, John and I will follow up with the Committee Co-Chairs in a day or so.

Public Session

No members of the public wished to speak.

Adjournment

Mr. Kurtyka MOVED to adjourn; SECONDED by Mr. Bshara and unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Bruder

Patricia M. Bruder
Secretary