



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



MINUTES
Wednesday, July 1, 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	present	Dr. Steve Adamowski	present 7:15
Tara Hyder	present	Rich Bshara	present
George Kurtyka	absent	Christopher Phipps	present
Ron Luneau	absent	Dr. Joshua Stuart	present

NVCOG Staff John DiCarlo was present.
Dr. Conway, Derby Public Schools and Dr. DiBacco, Ansonia Public Schools were present.

Public Session

Mr. Gildea asked three times if any member of the public wished to speak. There being none, he declared the public session closed.

Approval of Minutes – June 22, 2020

Dr. Stuart MOVED to approve the minutes of June 22, 2020; SECONDED by Mr. Phipps. Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer’s Report

Mr. Gildea reported there are no new invoices at this time.

Jim Gildea, Co-Chair
Joe Jaumann, Co-Chair
Dr. Steven Adamowski,
George Kurtyka, Secretary

Rich Bshara
Barbara DeGennaro
Tara Hyder

Ronald Luneau,
Chris Phipps
Joshua Stuart

Equalization amongst towns – Discussion/Possible action

Mr. Gildea forwarded a revised sheet from Simone Carpenter of DMG. The only change from the prior file is the Bradley School figure on page 8 has gone from \$587,942 in the PK-12/3 elementary school regionalization model to \$1,429,943, representing the addition that would be needed to offset the closing of Irving School.

To come up with the exact costs associated with the equalization, the Committee needs to answer a series of questions. Mr. Gildea suggested discussing and narrowing some of these questions down.

While Mr. Gildea feels that Question 4 relating to the building repairs is pivotal; all of the questions are important. Mr. Jaumann believes the Committee has enough information to start answering some of the questions. He suggested that numbers 1 and 2a are the pivotal questions for equalization. As to the question of contributing or leasing the buildings, where the money comes from on a lease situation is more of an individual community issue. Before they can be leased, they're going to want to have the code violations and site improvements addressed, and if the buildings are not being contributed, the onus doesn't fall on the regional district to make sure that work is getting done.

Question 1, "Which regional option is to be selected with which schools utilized?"

Mr. Jaumann noted that Ansonia has an aging middle school so the 9-12 option of a high school level only regionalization would not be favorable to the Ansonia members. Dr. Shuart noted that the 6-12 option would address the middle school issue for Ansonia and the high school issue for Derby. Mr. Bshara is not in favor of a shared central office and is mostly in favor of the full PK-12 regionalization.

Mr. Gildea would be in favor of a shared central office in Phase 2. He would be in favor of discussion 6-12 regionalization, PK-12 with 4 elementary schools and PK-12 with 3 elementary schools. He does not believe that closing Irving School is the best thing for the city or the students that school serves.

Ms. Hyder agreed and is in favor of keeping the neighborhood elementary schools intact. She feels as a representative of Derby taxpayers they should continue discussing regionalizing 9-12 because Derby is not in need of a new middle school. Ms. DeGennaro agreed.

Mr. Jaumann noted that Derby has a brand-new middle school; Ansonia has a relatively new high school. Both cities can benefit from sharing both of those in a regional district potentially, and that is the rationale for discussing it.

Mr. Gildea believes that each step saves greater money - 9-12 saves money, 6-12 saves more, PK-12/4 elementary schools saves even more, and PK-12/3 elementary schools saves even more. The savings shown in the report will balance out which option(s) make the most financial sense.

Dr. Shuart noted that it is important to prioritize what is important for each city, because at the end there will be give and take, both financial and philosophical educational benefits. In addition to which is best for the taxpayers, it is important to consider which scenario is best for all the students.

Dr. Adamowski noted that any community could look at this from the standpoint of advantages and disadvantages to themselves; there are no two communities that are the same. Looking at it in terms of equal savings, equal benefit would not be possible anywhere in the state at any time. He suggested the Committee look at the options that would enable the greatest savings such that a portion of those savings could be put into enhancing the educational program, benefitting every child in the new district equally. He suggested looking at PK-12 with Irving School included (PK-12/4).

Mr. Gildea asked the Committee if there is consensus to look at 9-12, 6-12, PK-12/4 elementary schools and PK-12/3 elementary schools.

Ms. Hyder is looking for the option that will make the taxpayers and the families excited and happy with this opportunity. The only option she would take off the table is the PK-12/3 elementary schools. She believes it will be worth the time to hash out all the other scenarios together as a group of 10.

Mr. Jaumann believes the two options the Committee members seem to be favoring are the 6-12 and the PK-12/4 elementary schools. He is in favor of looking at these two options side-by-side and piece-by-piece. By studying those two options, the answers to 80-90 percent of the other scenarios will emerge. Mr. Gildea agreed.

Mr. Jaumann noted that it seems to be the consensus of the Ansonia members that the 9-12 regionalization is the least likely option to consider. Ms. Hyder feels that as a Derby representative she owes it to her constituents to fully research all of the options.

To keep consensus and keep moving forward, the Committee will research 9-12, 6-12, PK-12/4 elementary, PK-12/3 elementary.

Mr. Jaumann suggested doubling the number of meetings to meet the Committee's deadline. He feels having the four separate conversations at each and every meeting will be extremely time-consuming and confusing. Mr. Gildea's concern is that the Committee has 20 months left and if the Committee may lose its cohesiveness if it eliminates options. He noted that even though he is not in favor of the PK-12/3 option, he will discuss it to keep the Committee moving forward.

Question 2a, "Will the schools be contributed or leased?"

Mr. Gildea does not believe the contribution rate is in the best interests of both cities collectively. Mr. Jaumann noted that contributions versus lease in each different scenario affects each community differently. Mr. Bshara is concerned about equalization in the leasing process. The true cost allocation between the towns for each scenario is based on the actual value of the buildings. In leasing, the building goes in for free and in some scenarios Ansonia

benefits and in some Derby benefits. In the lease option, an adjustment probably needs to be made one way or another.

Ms. DeGennaro noted that the numbers for both contribution and leasing were projected by the proportionate amounts of students in each district. Ansonia had 64 percent and Derby had 36 percent.

Dr. Adamowski suggested looking, on a PK-12 basis, to come out fairly equally such that you'd feel comfortable leasing the buildings to the regional school district for \$1 a year. The Committee discussed, in a 6-12 scenario, adding a 9th grade to the middle school or utilizing Derby High School in some way to avoid an addition at Ansonia High School.

Mr. Jaumann stated, under any scenario, you're looking at vast swings from one district to the other in the contribution scenario that really makes it very difficult. The lease option – both communities would have difficulty contributing land and buildings to a new regional creation. They may be much more comfortable with the scenario of a lease for a period of time.

Mr. Phipps is in favor of a lease that makes things as equitable for everybody as possible. Mr. Bshara explained that in the 6-12 scenario, the two schools are the newest ones, one in Derby, one in Ansonia, and that is very equitable. Even in the PK-12 the valuation of the schools will be fairly similar that the \$1 lease would work in that scenario. In the 9-12 there's only one town contributing a major capital asset yet both towns will get the use of it for \$1 a year.

The Committee discussed the equalization in the leasing option for the various scenarios. Some Derby committee members expressed concern that Ansonia members seem to have reached consensus on items that have not been discussed or reviewed by the entire Committee. Mr. Jaumann explained their reasoning behind the consensus and noted that by voicing that this early in the process opens the door for discussions around those items. He explained that the Ansonia members remain open minded and willing to continue having discussions.

Mr. Gildea noted that it is the consensus of the members for leasing.

2B, if leased, how much would the buildings be leased for?

Mr. Gildea suggested being consistent across the board. Three Commissioners immediately suggested \$1 per year per building to start.

Mr. Bshara may disagree, depending upon the level of regionalization chosen and believes the building values should be viewed as cash contribution. The Committee again discussed the equalization between the scenarios and the cases where one city may benefit over the other.

Mr. Gildea noted that it is the consensus to start out with the \$1 per building per year and then work with it discussing other ways to compensate for the value on the lease differential later in the questionnaire.

3A, Do we accept the valuations outlined in this document?

Mr. Gildea asked if any Committee member has issues with using these appraised figures for moving the ball forward. He believes that none of the figures DMG used included the fields that are owned by the cities – they represent the appraised costs of the physical structures of the schools and the lots those buildings sit on. If there are any changes that include fields, he will report back to the Committee. He will clarify with Simone Carpenter and report back to the Committee.

Mr. Jaumann has no issue with the numbers unless new information/figures come back splitting up the facilities in Derby.

Ms. Hyder noted that the fields are the jurisdiction of the cities; the buildings are the jurisdiction of the schools. A subjective value could be placed on the use of the fields. Mr. Gildea suggested using only the school appraisals and not include the fields that are under city control.

Ms. DeGennaro noted that the field card for Derby High School is 10 acres and clearly includes the fields. She wants to know what they used to come up with that value.

It was the consensus of the Committee to use the valuations outlined in the document, provided no new information is presented including the fields.

3B – Would Derby High School be contributed to the regional entity?

Mr. Gildea noted that Silver-Petrucci cited the large amount of work that would be needed to bring that building to code – the vast amount of ADA compliance issues, the annual cost of electric heat – they intentionally took DHS out for those reasons. Leaving Raise Academy, Little Raiders' University, and Advanced Manufacturing Center that occupy approximately 25 percent of the building now does not change the \$25 million appraisal. For this reason, he is not prepared to remove DHS from the regional entity as 25 percent of the building is still in use for education purposes. In a regionalized district these programs would be valuable to both Ansonia and Derby.

Mr. Jaumann suggested separating it out and attributing a different value to it. It's the same parcel and it's on the same card - but assessing each building separately because it is being presented and appraised as one single unit. The city may use that building for something else and that would require a separation. He also noted that Little Raiders' University would not be part of a 6-12 or 9-12 regionalization.

Ms. Hyder would like to know where those three programs would reside in any scenario. She doesn't feel it is cost effective to keep that building open for 54 preschoolers. Raise is very fluid and the number of students changes. As far as the manufacturing program, busing students from Pulaski Highway to Chatfield Street just to attend that program is also added expense. She does not believe keeping DHS in the mix is cost effective.

Mr. Bshara would like to know if DHS is part of the regional entity, would all the improvements have to be made to it. Mr. Gildea noted, if the answer is yes, we'd have a different discussion.

We'd have to see if we'd be better off relocating those programs. Mr. Adamowski believes it would be grandfathered for current use, and it could continue to house those programs, and even the 9th grade which is housed there now. He feels the Advanced Manufacturing Program would be an asset to the regional district for all students. Mr. Gildea will ask Simone and report back to the Committee.

The consensus is, there are three spaces impacting the property, 80 students, three quality programs that are important to maintain. We can follow up with Simone to determine if the annual operating cost is still more cost-effective than trying to find an alternative space.

3C – Do we want to modify the valuations so some other means such as the lease?

And

3D – If yes, what are the assumed valuations?

Mr. Gildea stated, I assume we still want to maintain the \$1 per building per year, and we want to address the capital contributions at a later date.

The consensus is, for now we're satisfied with the valuations, pending how Derby High School is utilized.

4 – What level of repair will each school receive?

Mr. Gildea feels the Committee will need a separate meeting for facilities. On page 7, we were told that the code violations were 1's, the site improvements are 2's, future improvements are anything that are 3's and 4's. There are a number of different 2's that are in fact code violations. He asked Ms. Carpenter to revise the spreadsheet and list all of the code violations together.

The Committee wants to wait for an updated sheet from DMG where all the code violations are listed together. There was a recommendation for a special meeting for the purpose of discussing the facilities.

5 – Should the equalization portion of the agreement strictly address the values of the facilities contributed?

Mr. Gildea stated, I don't think we have to come up with the answer tonight. If the answer is just conceptually yes, I think we've done our work today. Some models favor Ansonia, some models favor Derby.

The Committee members discussed the meaning of this question.

It was the consensus of the Committee that this question cannot be answered without first receiving the further requested information and answering most of the prior questions.

TRSSC Next Steps – Discussion/Possible action

Depending upon the availability of the members, there may be a special meeting for the purpose of reviewing the facilities on Monday, July 20th. The next regular meeting will be held on July 27th.

Mr. Jaumann found the questions at the end of this report to be very helpful going through the process. It helps us prompt discussion and help us decide what needs more conversation. We had questions on each point that we really need to get to. That will be very helpful to us.

Point of Good Order

Mr. Bshara apologized if he has offended anybody. He thinks tonight's meeting was very well done and is looking forward to more frank discussion. Mr. Gildea agreed.

Mr. Jaumann agreed and appreciates the honesty and frankness. There are 10 strong personalities in the room and it's great to go back and forth in a professional manner.

Public Session

Mr. Gildea asked 3 times if any member of the public wished to speak. Being none, he declared the public session closed.

Adjournment

Mr. Bshara MOVED to adjourn; SECONDED by Dr. Shuart. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Bruder

Patricia M. Bruder
Secretary