



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



MINUTES
Monday, January 6, 2020 – 7 p.m.
ZOOM virtual conferencing platform via the Internet

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 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
Tara Hyder	present	Rich Bshara	Present 7:30
George Kurtyka	present	Christopher Phipps	present
Ron Luneau 7:30	present	Dr. Joshua Shuart	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 – November 23, 2020

The November 23 minutes will be approved at the next meeting.

Treasurer’s Report – Discussion/Possible Action

There were no expenditures in December, and there is no Treasurer’s Report.

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

Review Proposed 2021 Meeting Schedule

Dr. Adamowski MOVED to approve the proposed 2021 Meeting Schedule understanding that the Committee will meet via Zoom as necessary; SECONDED by Dr. Shuart. Motion carried unanimously.

DMG Invoice for work towards Phase 2.3 – Discussion / Possible Action

Mr. Gildea noted that the Committee is not ready for an invoice discussion this evening as DMG's justification for payment was only received in the last 24 hours. This will be discussed on the 25th.

Review Optimum 3000 school staffing layout as presented by Dr. Conway and Dr. DiBacco – Discussion and Possible Action

Dr. Conway took the Teaching and Learning section; Dr. DiBacco took the Special Ed section. They identified the districts in the state, regardless of demographics or whether they're Alliance or not, that would have a similar population as ours would be if combined. They went to those districts' websites to see what the staffing levels looked like in these two areas. If more information was needed, or if something didn't seem right on the website, they reached out to the Superintendents directly.

The Committee reviewed the results. The average for Teaching and Learning across the districts is 3. DMG had reduced ours to 2. Districts that have demographics similar to ours are at 4. We increased ours to 3.

In Special Populations Leadership, the average was 3. We felt that was adequate and was aligned to the Alliance Districts within this list. We added back in to bring ours to 3.

Early Childhood is a +1. It's not another director but it's a director and an assistant director for the two districts combined.

Under Business Office, DMG dropped from 7 to 4. We reviewed those positions one by one. You have a business manager, an assistant business manager, an accounts payable. That would be a bare minimum. Ansonia has a grants manager. Derby does not, so we keep that in. School business administrator is the only position that in this, we don't know where it came from; we eliminated it. You still need human resources, even with a business manager and certainly a data analyst. Derby's data analysis is currently done by a receptionist. It's a necessary position. We added two of those positions back in, reducing it by one, and added back \$112,858.

DMG reduced Operations and Facilities to one. We brought that back up to include a facilities director. We currently have a maintenance manager as well because the facilities director isn't always that hands-on maintenance manager guy. We added back in the \$78,996.

We felt that technology is increasing in districts. The things we use for teaching are driven by technology – the software, the tools and devices where every student in the district has a device. We added in the \$41,320.

Food services – they went from three to one; we went from 3 to 2 and added back in the assistant food director position to service all of the schools.

Clerical was interesting – as we looked on websites and followed up with phone calls to double check things, we found all the other districts had clerical for all of the positions. When we add an assistant superintendent, we're not adding clerical. When we add a director of teaching and learning we're not adding clerical. All of the other districts are bringing in clerical in addition to those administrative positions. DMG had gone from 9 to 6; we brought it back up to 9 and added back in the \$127,000, knowing it's a minimum of three additional clerical support staff that will be needed to support these other positions and offices that don't exist now.

Under Principals in the 4-school model, the recommendation for the high school level was to go from 5 to 3. We felt supporting a freshman academy with an assistant principal and then having the two other assistant principals for the 10-12. The others for the middle school level seemed appropriate. The elementary school level, in order to go to the four schools, we'd be adding an assistant principal at Bradley School.

In the 3-school model high school doesn't change. We would not need the additional assistant principal at the elementary level.

Mr. Gildea stated, DMG's number is \$517,613. After adding the positions back in, that number changes to \$262,304.

[Mr. Bshara and Mr. Luneau arrive at this point]

Under Other Staff, we didn't have enough information as to exactly what positions that referred to, so it was left the same.

Under Special Education Costs, we reflected the increase in administrative support, but don't know exactly what DMG is including in special education costs, so we left that the same as well.

DMG can adjust the savings once we provide them with these revised numbers.

Dr. DiBacco stated, while we were conservative and made our decisions looking at districts like ours; we could have added more curriculum people and more support. There is a very large expense in out of district placement for special education, and hopefully there will be an administrator making the decisions surrounding that. There should be confidential secretaries in HR and Finance.

Mr. Gildea stated, if you think there are glaring omissions you should let us know what more you think you need. I don't think the intent was to be conservative. Dr. Conway asked if the Superintendents could reach out directly to DMG to get clarity on how DMG arrived at these numbers, what they included and didn't include. Mr. Gildea feels it is important for them to do so.

Ms. Hyder agreed, there needs to be more central office staff for a successful merger and to run a school district of the proposed size. She is in favor of the Superintendents reaching out to DMG to find out exactly what their thinking is. She thanked Dr. DiBacco and Dr. Conway for all the extra work and time they're putting into this. Ms. DeGennaro agreed with Ms. Hyder, and thanked Dr. DiBacco and Dr. Conway as well.

Mr. Phipps thanked Dr. Conway and Dr. DiBacco, and noted that a big part of the equation is, if we are going to do this, let's do it right. We want to end up with a better product, with the best education possible for the kids of these two cities. If doing that reduces the savings a little bit then so be it. He then asked, is there any type of security – SROs or security officers – in this plan? Dr. Conway thought it may have been included in "other staff," which is why we want to get clarity.

Dr. Adamowski thanked the Superintendents for their thoughtful analysis. In regard to the non-educational services offered by the school system – transportation, food service, cleaning of the school buildings, security if that is not provided by the municipalities – is the assumption that those services would be outsourced as opposed to run directly by the district?

Dr. DiBacco replied, we have our in-house food service and custodial, but transportation would be an outside vendor. Right now, we have an SRO at our high school, but it would be of interest if that program would be expanded. We could go to outside services if you don't want to own it. Dr. Conway explained how Derby is in the black now in food service because of the shared services program they entered into with Ansonia four years ago. They have since gone out on their own following that exact model.

Dr. Adamowski asked for the justification of the Superintendents' recommendation of four administrators versus DMG's recommended of three at the high school. Dr. Conway replied, we felt we should have one assistant principal exclusive to the freshman academy. We thought of really providing optimal support to the freshmen population coming in at the start of the new regional high school, providing someone to really get to know those kids and support them in every single way. Then if you want to keep a traditional model at the other levels of two assistant principals, you'd have a total of four at that point – one principal and three assistant principals.

Review Updated Finance and Budget information from DMG – Discussion / Possible Action

Mr. Bshara feels there are a lot of arbitrary numbers, the 5, 10, 20 percent marginal savings that are referenced. We need to remember these numbers are about two years old, so realistically there is probably an additional \$1 million to \$2 million in the real numbers that we're looking at today. The total expenditures currently, which we know is about two years ago, has the total between Ansonia and Derby of almost \$61 million being spent for this report.

Mr. Gildea reviewed the projected per pupil numbers over the next five years and thus the projected budget numbers. He explained in detail how the numbers were arrived at.

Mr. Bshara does not understand what they used as their base – it is all inclusive, including grants and everything else. To go from the almost \$61 million in '18-19, to \$54 million as the '20-21 base number – the \$7 million gap does not make sense to him. It's on the next to the last page. If they didn't include the grants, that may be part of the variation.

Mr. Jaumann explained that he believes it's facility costs as well as the staffing costs, cumulatively, depending on the model. Matt Venhorst indicated that in that first year you get to readjust your MBR based on your first year's budget. That first year you get to budget based on what you think you need, and then after that you adjust it, in communication with the State Board of Education. That's what sets your MBR. Dr. Shuart stated, the \$7 million wasn't savings, it was an adjusted, combined MBR.

Mr. Gildea stated, we know the staffing numbers are going to change. I believe the better step is to let the Superintendents do their work, get a staffing number we all agree with, give those numbers to DMG and have DMG put those numbers into this and have them come to a future meeting to discuss the finance piece and walk us through that. Mr. Bshara added, we need to discuss apples and apples – whatever is in the top needs to be in the bottom, or whatever is not in the top should not be in the bottom grouping. It doesn't look like that's the case here.

Dr. Conway stated that his suggestion to Nate would be give us the same report – one with per pupil expenditure and one with just general fund, because those are different based upon grant funds. Mr. Gildea asked, suggested having them do that after the Committee is on board with the staffing numbers.

Mr. Jaumann suggested having DMG provide the Committee with a revised document for the next meeting to facilitate more of this discussion and coincide with the staffing discussion, and then if we need a third revision, we get a third revision.

Mr. Gildea MOVED to authorize the Superintendents to communicate and work with DMG on upgrading the staffing model and request specificity regarding the terms "etc.," "other staff," "marginal 5% savings," and the \$130,000.

Ms. Hyder asked the Superintendents, in their conversations to ask them to define "etcetera," "other staff," "marginal 5% savings," and the rationale for choosing that. On the 6th to last page in the document, there are two specific sections where I question the thought process – one is "school-based savings (maintenance, PD, curriculum, technology, and etc.)" a savings of \$130,000 – I can't imagine what that is. In addition, there's a section on athletic costs as a wash – not a savings nor an expenditure. The sports programs will grow with a JV program, a Freshmen program, with head coaches there, more transportation costs, more equipment costs. Mr. Kurtyka suggested adding as much staff and building the best program as possible.

SECONDED by Mr. Kurtyka. Motion carried unanimously.

Co-Chairs Report on Legislative delegation meeting to discuss potential incentives and/or Legislative assistance

Mr. Gildea and Mr. Jaumann met with the Legislative delegation, Kara Rochelle, Nicole Klarides-Ditria, George Cabrera, and Mary Welander. Mr. Jaumann explained it was a positive, informational meeting to fill them in on what the Committee has been doing. The first part of the meeting was letting them know what we have discussed and what we thought the Committee was looking for – the reimbursement and trying to achieve a much higher reimbursement rate. New construction and renovation reimbursement rates increase in a regionalization model by 10 percent. It actually merges, so we would end up with something in the range of about 73 percent. If regionalization went through, we would be at the 83 percent mark. Most of that discussion centered around trying to get them up to the 100 percent mark so neither community would have to go out of pocket for any of the renovations or improvements that we had talked about doing earlier. They were very receptive to that idea – it was something they thought that they could take back to their respective caucuses and talk about, see about doing, and possibly even put together a proposed bill. Nicole had offered to work with Kara to try to get that done. We discussed meeting again when the Session started to coordinate dates, when and if they need information from us.

Mr. Jaumann continued, the conversation then turned to static funding once a regional entity exists. Ensuring that Alliance stays put, at least for the short term until we're no longer there. That is my understanding from speaking with Counsel from the State Board of Education is the case; Alliance will not immediately be removed. We would possibly have to reapply in the second year. The conversation with the delegation centered more around increased ECS dollars or a possible regionalization grant. A completely separate grant that would be given only to regionalized school districts in the amount of whatever it would be, going forward without an end date – a 2, 4, 3 percent additional grant that would be allocated to communities that chose to regionalize voluntarily. They were very receptive to all the ideas and would need to determine whether or not there are votes in the Legislature to do it.

Mr. Gildea added, it was interesting to me to recognize that the savings numbers may be somewhat smaller based upon the caliber of the program that we build – the costs are anywhere from \$16 to \$20 million, after renovation costs. So, whether we get to the 100 percent, we have to get those costs on the plate. That was a point Joe and I made for certain. We talked about meeting as early as next week. The Session opened today, and bills have to be submitted by 1/22. Clearly there has to be some legislative help here.

Mr. Jaumann added, there are certain, very small incentives as it is right now – one is the increase in the reimbursement rate to voluntarily regionalize, and the other is \$100 per pupil. It was stated by the Governor and the democratic majorities in both chambers and from their leadership that they want to discuss regionalization. We have asked them to take back to their caucuses – what are those incentives going to look like? We are two economically distressed communities that are talking about it and doing it voluntarily. Where is the carrot that you're

going to be able to hang out there for us? We're hopeful to hear some information back from them.

Dr. Shuart thanked Mr. Gildea and Mr. Jaumann for their efforts and the important conversation they are having.

Mr. Kurtyka stated, when the original proposal came out from the last governor about regionalization, transportation was supposed to be picked up by the State. Dr. Conway replied, it was discussed but did not go through. Mr. Jaumann stated, we've heard a lot of those ideas about how the State would pick up this and pick up that – I know they've awarded certain school districts certain things. For example, New London basically has 100 percent reimbursement on all their magnet schools, if they were to create them. There is precedent for that kind of legislation out there. We're hopeful that our delegation will be able to do that.

TRSSC Next Steps – Discussion / Possible Action

Mr. Gildea stated, as far as next steps, we made a clear motion about this Committee's next steps.

Regarding the email from Matt that we shared out to the full Committee, the second part of it regarding Committee membership replacements - this group of 10 has been in place for a while and has been great together. I'm pretty confident we'll finish this out together. It just reinforced how you do the replacement process. The brunt of the email was the life of the Committee. Matt was reminding us that February of 2022, about 13 months away, is the deadline for us to complete our work. When Matt sent the email he said he'd prefer to have something by April, and the document said that they would ideally like to have a final report by June, 2021, and in a perfect world, April 2021. We've made great progress, we're down to two models, we're finalizing the financial piece, but we just wanted to share that that is the State's hope – June to get a final report, giving them 8 months to review.

Point of Good Order

Mr. Kurtyka has confidence that the Committee will meet the June 2021 date.

Mr. Gildea stated, all 10 of us are here, I missed you guys over the holiday break and it's good to see everybody again. I'm looking forward to the next six months and working through this.

Mr. Jaumann and Ms. DeGennaro thanked the Committee and wished everyone a Happy New Year.

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.

Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Bruder

Patricia M. Bruder
Secretary