



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



MINUTES
Monday, November 23, 2020 – 7 p.m.
ZOOM virtual conferencing platform via the Internet

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 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
George Kurtyka	present	Christopher Phipps	present
Ron Luneau	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 – October 7, 2020

Dr. Adamowski MOVED to approve the minutes of October 7, 2020; SECONDED by Mr. Kurtyka. Motion carried unanimously.

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

Approval of Minutes – October 26, 2020

Mr. Kurtyka MOVED to table approval of the minutes of October 26, 2020; SECONDED by Mr. Jaumann. Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report – Discussion/Possible Action

Dr. Adamowski reported that one payment for meeting minutes and the \$25,000 payment to DMG were approved at the last meeting. The remaining balances due are \$9,000 presumably owed to DMG for the closeout of their work. We will see the allocation of \$24,000 for Phase 2.3 in the budget to facilitate public workshops and public information outreach relative to the Committee's proposal. There is an administrative account of \$21,135 to cover the remaining clerical services and the balance will go toward the cost of referendum in both Ansonia and Derby. A good portion of our budget has been spent down, and a couple of critical accounts remain for the future.

The Chairmen will have a conference call with DMG Wednesday to discuss payment of the \$9,000 and a portion of the \$24,000. They still owe us a discussion on Task 2; they were supposed to justify some of the savings discussed under shared services. Phase 2.3 - the \$24,000 - is still under discussion and needs to be defined. DMG is supposed to facilitate two workshops with our Committee and other stakeholders. They are supposed to provide technical memos describing topics, participants, objectives of each workshop.

Review Finance and Budget Information. Discussion and Possible Action

The Committee had asked DMG about the additional construction costs for the Regional High School to support the advanced manufacturing center. Housatonic Community College does not feel our HVAC system is robust enough for the advanced manufacturing center and is in the process of putting together an estimate to upgrade the system for that area, based upon the equipment. So currently the cost of relocating the advanced manufacturing center to the Regional High School is \$181,000 with potentially a bit more for the HVAC.

Ms. Hyder asked if that cost to relocate is with an identified space in the current AHS building and everything it would cost to reconstruct or remodel that space to house the machinery, the electrical, and whatever it needs to function.

Mr. Gildea replied, Silver-Petrucci anticipated that would move. They said there was space there that potentially needs to be renovated/constructed.

He continued, separate from 2.3 with its two workshops, we still have a commitment from NVCOG to have DMG come to two more meetings. We need to discuss and decide when it will be fruitful for them to come back.

Silver-Petrucci indicated that the elementary schools would have enough space to put the Pre-K programs in there. We are waiting to hear from them, however, on whether Bradley School has enough space to house its own Pre-K plus that of Irving School. If not, there could be a cost of approximately \$60,000 to add the Pre-K space to the addition at Bradley School that's currently planned.

Mr. Jaumann noted that the email discussing the MBR process was distributed before the 10/26 meeting. It lays out the fact the MBR for the first year of the regional school district would be the equivalent of both MBRs combined. After that they reassess according to the statutes. The additional questions that were asked, and specifically regarding the labor negotiations, Matt replied and provided some information and additional guidance as to the budget. There was a legal opinion regarding the labor issue put together by an attorney during the Norfolk-Colebrook regionalization. It speaks to some of the labor issues, the obligations of the districts before they regionalize, and the obligations of the regional school district. Matt recommended discussions amongst the Committee to discuss whether we need to get a legal opinion on our own as a committee. Mr. Jaumann would like to distribute that for the next meeting.

The Committee then discussed the finance perspective and the DMG Ansonia-Derby Temporary Regional School Study Summary of Savings Pre-K through 12 comprehensive document. The document spells out where they got the savings used in the Task 1 Report, and they broke the Equalization document down into the savings per town. All savings come from a reduction in personnel. Mr. Gildea reviewed the positions, representing about \$1,063,000 in staff savings in the Central Office piece. In school-based leadership, there is another \$379,000 in savings. In the 3 elementary school model the savings is \$517,613.

Ms. Hyder asked how the positions funded by the Commissioner's Network will be accounted for. Mr. Jaumann explained that he understands that the Committee is talking about the overall costs. The funding aspect of it has not been addressed. As we get closer to deciding, we need to involve the Legislative delegation and our respective Mayors and Boards of Aldermen to see what our funding is going to look like, if and how it will shift. Both being Alliance Districts, and Derby having the Commissioner's Network funding, what will it look like and what are the incentives, if any, to regionalize.

In response to a question from Ms. Hyder, Mr. Bshara explained that Ansonia's crossing guards are now paid through the education budget. He went on to explain, if you look at the total cost used with this, approximately \$38 million from Ansonia and \$22 million for Derby, those numbers are all inclusive and include all grants and in-kind services. All the pieces of the puzzle are in here for that \$60 million combined Ansonia-Derby number. It's both what the City is allocating and what the grants coming in are adding.

Mr. Gildea explained, they show the salary and benefit changes moving to Derby's contract. By moving to the Derby contract there would be a savings of \$549,414. The Committee discussed the contract negotiations and their purported savings, as well as a few other projected savings

points in the document. Ms. Hyder expressed her concern about cutting some of the positions, especially clerical in the Central Office. She doesn't feel as if the projected savings portrayed in the reports and printed in the media are very realistic because they are based on projections that may or may not be actionable. Mr. Jaumann added, while these projected savings are just projections, there are other potential places for savings, specifically in out-of-district costs for special education. There is the possibility in a regional district of keeping more of those students in district.

Mr. Gildea agreed, and suggested refining both the savings piece and the costs. Mr. Bshara feels the projected numbers may be attainable in a couple of years, but not through the transition phase. He noted that a lot has changed since these numbers were put together from budgets of two years ago. He feels it is merely a guide at this point. Mr. Jaumann added, in the first year if you do realize savings, they're going to be put right back into the district to fund the transition.

Dr. Adamowski feels the administrative savings hopefully can be maximized in a manner that would enable the regional board to improve the educational offerings of the school system within the boundaries of the MER. That would create a situation where there would not be a tax increase at least the first year in either community. This Committee is really looking at the question of, "how do you staff a school system of 3,100 to 3,500 students?" It's a relatively small system, even once combined. Perhaps DMG can look at other districts this size and see how they're staffed.

The Committee continued discussing possible savings and what to do with those savings. They continued to review the data. Mr. Gildea stated, if there are things missing, we as a committee should layer those recommendations in. Whatever the next step is, we can't claim savings that aren't realistic. By the same token, we shouldn't move forward with a body of studies that doesn't add in the things that we think we should add in. This group should decide what they think may be missing and come back with thoughts and recommendations. He asked the two Superintendents to look at the projected savings lists and tag what is concerning, what is missing. Dr. Adamowski suggested designating several million dollars in the budget for program improvement and leave that to the new regional school board.

Mr. Bshara is looking at the effect of projected enrollment and what that impact would have on the cities. In reading the enrollment chart, it would say that Ansonia is probably going to be stable at about 2,215 for the next 10 years but that there's a potential 25 percent reduction in the enrollment from Derby. With Ansonia keeping a constant enrollment, their cost will go up and Derby would benefit from the combination. It is something that needs to be considered. Mr. Jaumann noted that a forthcoming document from the State Board of Education discusses the MBR requirement under 10-262j. There is change in circumstances language in that statute with specific dates applied that actually discusses in a regional district situation when enrollment decreases in one town over the other.

Mr. Bshara continued, regarding the revenue side of these projections, does the ECS, Alliance money, Priority School District, title I, and all the other grants that we're cumulatively getting

go to the City or to the region? If we go to a regional district, is there a reduction in revenue because we're regionalized versus independent.

Mr. Gildea suggested having Matt Venhorst come to a future meeting to go over that and answer some of these questions. Mr. Jaumann stated, I don't think Matt or anyone other than OPM, the Governor's Office and the Legislature are going to be able to answer the question about the grants and a decrease on the revenue side like that. He will be able to answer the statutory MBR questions and how that breaks down, but I believe that we need to approach our Legislative delegation, OPM, and see if we can get a picture of what that revenue side is going to look like, and any incentives.

Mr. Kurtyka reported looking at other school districts that have the same total enrollment. Monroe has 3,105 and Windsor has 3,257, their total school budgets run between \$58 million and \$67 million. That includes North Haven, Vernon, Avon, Guilford, Windsor. \$58.5 is the low; \$67.4 in Windsor is the high.

Dr. Adamowski explained, ECS is always received by the towns and cities and they will use that to offset their share of their contribution to the regional district. The Alliance grant, in contrast, hopefully will be an amount in combination or exceeds the total of the two current Alliance grants – will go to the Regional School District. That is true of Title I, the Priority School District grant as well. In general, the grants will go to the district.

Ms. Hyder expressed concern about cutting curriculum personnel in half while introducing a new, enhanced, cutting-edge curriculum. She feels curriculum staff is needed at the central office level and at the school level to provide the support to teachers and students. She is wary of trusting projected enrollments, and as an example explained that in 2004 the Ansonia Board of Education requested \$225,000 from the tax board because their brand-new high school was already almost at capacity. They needed 4 portables at the high school and 6 at the middle school within four years of building a brand-new high school.

Dr. Shuart agreed regarding the curriculum piece and staffing, and with Dr. Adamowski's overall vision of trying to start with the goal of saving as much by being efficient as you can.

Mr. Gildea feels that one of the next steps will be to ensure we're including the educational program saving where possible, and to finalize the projected savings. He would like to reach out to the two Superintendents to help decide which areas may or may not be cut. There are savings there for example, administrative savings, utility savings, for example, Derby High School is all electric.

Dr. Adamowski noted that the curriculum area is the one that jumps out in terms of needing greater capacity. He asked if the Committee can get the advice of the two respective superintendents on that issue, and maybe they could reach out to a couple of the districts mentioned that are similar in enrollment to the projected enrollment of the regional district, including North Haven, and see how they organize their curriculum and instruction.

Mr. Jaumann agreed with Ms. Hyder's point about the enrollment projections, even more so right now in light of COVID and online learning, home schooling and things like that.

Mr. Gildea asked Dr. Conway and Dr. DiBacco if they are comfortable over the coming weeks looking at the savings lists and finding anything there concerning, or anything they're willing to sign off on. He asked the Committee if there are any obvious program misses be prepared to bring those forth at the next meeting.

Review Enrollment and Demographics Data. Discussion and Possible Action

It was the consensus of the Committee to put this item off to the agenda of the next meeting.

TRSSC Next Steps – Discussion / Possible Action

Mr. Gildea and Mr. Jaumann will reach out to the Legislative delegation, OPM and the Governor's Office to understand whether or not there will be any incentives to offset the \$20 million cost to regionalize. They will also discuss the possibly of getting a better reimbursement on construction and renovation costs, as well as ECS dollars for the regionalized district.

The Superintendents of Schools will get together on programming and staffing. Committee members will bring forward any issues they may have on programming.

The Chairmen will discuss the projected savings budget with Simone.

Point of Good Order

Mr. Gildea noted that the Committee has done a lot of heavy lifting, and he appreciates the humor and sense of camaraderie talking things out. He wished everyone a good and safe Thanksgiving.

Mr. Bshara thanked Mr. Gildea for his good presentation of data each month and his impressive organizational skills.

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 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Bruder

Patricia M. Bruder
Secretary