



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



MINUTES – Special Meeting
Tuesday, June 29, 2021 – 7:30 p.m.
ZOOM virtual conferencing platform via the Internet

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 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	absent	Dr. Joshua Shuart	present

Others participating:

Simone Carpenter and Nate Levenson, DMG Group
NVCOG Staff John DiCarlo, Derby Superintendent of Schools Dr. Conway, Ansonia Superintendent of Schools Dr. DiBacco.

Approval of Minutes May 5, 2021. Discussion/Possible Action

Mr. Kurtyka MOVED to approve the minutes of May 5, 2021; SECONDED by Dr. Shuart. 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

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.

Treasurer's Report – Discussion/Possible Action

Dr. Adamowski reported that there was one expenditure for \$300 for the minutes of the last three meetings.

Review and Discuss DMG Report "Summary of Savings Pre-K – 12 Regionalization" – Discussion/Possible Action

Nate Levenson explained that DMG has come up with a spreadsheet that includes a number of changes that the Committee had requested. It includes future costs, potential savings, and how they might be allocated to the towns.

The first change is the data set - to make sure it is data that comes from the State that is intentionally and purposely designed to be comparable from one district to another. It's entire purposes is to ensure the comparisons are apples-to-apples and inclusive of things like health insurance. It didn't matter if it is paid for by the town or by the school; if it is for educational purposes the State collects it, and that is what makes it comparable.

Second is, any time you're doing forecasts, you have to make some assumptions. How will enrollment change, per pupil spending, budgets. There always have to be assumptions. In the past we made what we thought were very reasonable assumptions and presented the data. In this spreadsheet, we made the assumptions clear, and made them changeable.

The spreadsheet calculates future costs and future enrollment; it plugs in scenarios around potential savings and allocates the savings back to each of the two towns.

Simone Carpenter then reviewed the details of the spreadsheet with the Committee. She noted that the State's enrollment numbers include out-of-district placements as well as Pre-K students. The State numbers include total budget, enrollment, and per pupil expenditures for each town. From there everything projected out is based on the growth rate of the budgets using the five-year data DMG was originally provided, a zero percent increase/decrease in enrollment, and the per pupil costs – total budget divided by the enrollment.

The tables below those numbers calculate the savings overall, and by each community, for the 4-elementary option and the 3-elementary option. The tabs at the bottom are three exact copies of the worksheet – each based on the three Central Office scenarios that had been presented in the past.

She discussed the spending and the savings of each town in the different scenarios. In the 19-person Central Office and 4-elementary scenario, we are projecting that Ansonia loses money in the first year, the second year they're about neutral, and the third year they are slightly positive. In this scenario, both cities are seeing savings all three years.

She reminded the Committee of the flexibility of the spreadsheet whereby if one number is changed, it projects out throughout, so that many different assumptions can be considered.

Ms. Carpenter entertained questions from the Committee members regarding the spreadsheet formulas and the enrollment numbers.

Mr. Gildea stated, it's nice to understand the numbers, the spreadsheet, the variables. Tonight is about understanding the spreadsheet, and at our next meeting in eight days, the discussions we have to have will be about Central Office headcount and 3 or 4 elementary schools. He noted that he will redistribute the Word document that explains the Central Office numbers. Ms. Carpenter will share the Excel sheet with the Committee containing the formulas used to come up with the numbers on that document. She will also find and send the original enrollment report to the Co-Chairs to view the history on student enrollment.

Review and Discuss DMG Report "Equalization Decision Making." Discussion/Possible Action

Mr. Gildea explained that the legislative delegation was able to get the 85 percent cap removed and were able to get a 20 percent regionalization bonus for towns that were regionalizing. It was 20 percent higher than that highest reimbursement rate. We forwarded that language to this Committee, and to DMG, and they've updated the equalization model.

Ms. Carpenter explained that the numbers have been run with the 97.5 percent reimbursement rate. For 9-12 it's for the high school but not for all of the other schools; for the 6-12 it's for the high school and middle school but not the others. She explained a table that outlines the cost to the cities of the expansions, addressing code violations and addressing the work that was selected at the higher reimbursement rate.

She explained that Bradley School is renovate as new; it goes from being just the work selected to being every aspect of the building being renovated and would operate almost like a new building. It is reimbursed on a square-foot basis. The increase in enrollment to 100 percent utilized in the 3-elementary scenario affects a 97.5 percent reimbursement rate. In the 4-elementary scenario it's 91 percent utilization rate.

Ms. Carpenter reviewed the difference between contributing and leasing the buildings to the regional district. She noted that the numbers assume that any regional renovation costs would be distributed based on per pupil, not taking any possible lease provisions into consideration.

In response to a question by Mr. Kurtyka, Ms. Carpenter explained that the way the total cost is split between the two cities to cover all of the renovations after the 97 percent reimbursement rate depends on whether you contribute the buildings or lease the buildings. If you contribute it's different, because the contribution of the building counts as dollars that the cities are contributing to the regional district.

Mr. Levenson explained that there are two separate bonds, but contingent votes. Mr. Gildea stated, with PK-12 4-elementary schools, we thought we would pursue a leasing option, so in that scenario Ansonia would be liable for 4.3 and Derby 2.4. Mr. Jaumann agreed with that thought, as allocated based on student enrollment. There is a lot of flexibility and moving parts that could change, because in the lease scenario you have flexibility. Mr. Levenson explained, this is the outcome if you allocate strictly based on enrollment. The lease agreement allows you to have some different rules – different allocation of costs, different allocation of savings – if you wanted to.

TRSSC Next Steps – Discussion / Possible Action

We need to resolve the central office headcount and the 4-school 3-school elementary options. Those will be the next topics of discussion.

Dr. Adamowski stated, in terms of the governance and central office I'd like to see us spend time on program improvement prior to dealing with the central office issue. We are dealing with two very basic school districts in terms of what's being offered programmatically to students, and very basic in terms of the central office. I don't think it's wise to lead with central office enhancement; I would rather see program enhancements first.

Mr. Gildea noted that it is late in the process. Having a program of studies we agreed upon and endorsed, if there is any program bolstering the Committee thinks we should address, such as instead of STEM coordinator, or assistant superintendent, we should have those discussions as we define the central office positions.

Dr. Adamowski specifically noted that a STEM coordinator might be helpful if you have a good STEM program. He would like to discuss early childhood education - preschool, and a gifted program. Also, the kinds of supports that could be available to high-needs students – both districts are at about 74% in high-needs students. Accountability data shows that programs are not robust enough to bring those students up currently. These are outside of the narrow limits of the high school program of study and do have implications for the central office.

Mr. Jaumann noted that the Committee's role is generally advisable – we're not building the district – that's the job of a regional board when one is established. Our role is to make projections and send whether this is feasible to the State Board of Education, who in turn says yes, the plan that you've put on paper is feasible, and then it goes to referendum. While we can include language that suggests prioritizing these additional things, going beyond that at this point in time doesn't fall into our time crunch. I'm not sure we can add into the recommendation to the State Board of Education other than, "we would like to go in this direction."

Mr. Gildea agreed with the example of recommending a 32-person central office and a certain type of program but feels the Committee simply doesn't have time to design the actual program with specifics. Dr. Adamowski feels that the Committee needs to be able to tell parents why they need to vote in favor of this – why will it be better for their children. He would like to have the sense that savings will be applied to enhancements of the program and things that could be offered that may not be offered now. Mr. Gildea pointed out the 68 electives that were different between the two communities that both towns will be able to participate in.

Ms. Hyder noted that Dr. Conway and Dr. DiBacco plotted out those models. Looking at the three models will help us understand what type of a school district that type of central office would be able to support. Additionally, the details this Committee spells out may or may not come to fruition depending upon the people that ultimately comprise the regional school board.

Mr. Levenson noted as an example, even though this Committee cannot bind a future school board, you could say in your talking points, "we can't promise that will happen, but there will in fact be this \$2 million pool and our recommendation would have been, save a million, invest a million in programming." You could opt to say something like this or say that others have.

Ms. Hyder believes it is not the Committee's role to put out selling points, but to put out the facts and not necessarily promises, because the Committee cannot guarantee that.

Mr. Gildea continue with the next steps.

- Central office count – 19 v. 28 v. 32 v. 34
- Mr. Gildea will get the new Excel spreadsheet out to the members.
- Discussion and possible action on the 4-elementary v. 3-elementary schools.

Dr. Shuart thanked Simone and Nate for their work since the last meeting. They delivered great content and most importantly the ability for the Committee to play with the numbers and run scenarios that go back to the original reports. It's evident that they put a lot of effort in between those meetings.

At Dr. Adamowski's suggestion, the Committee discussed total headcount as it relates to the central office headcount and positions. With expanded programs of study, there will be teachers needed in those areas.

Mr. Kurtyka noted that this Committee was formed to see if both cities could combine their school systems and save money. It is the new regional school board's decision on how they want to do it. This Committee's charge is to look at the numbers, save money, recommend regionalizing or not recommend regionalizing. The regional school board will decide overall headcount.

Point of Good Order

Mr. Gildea stated, it was good to see everyone at the meeting tonight.

Mr. Bshara thanked Nate and Simone. He likes the spreadsheet.

The next meeting is scheduled for 7:30 pm Wednesday, July 7th.

Public Session

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

Adjournment

Mr. Kurtyka MOVED to adjourn; SECONDED by Ms. Hyder. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Bruder

Patricia M. Bruder
Secretary