

ANSONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION

MINUTES

PLACE: Robert E. Zuraw Admin. Building DTL Conference Room **DATE:** 03 April 2018 **TIME:** 7:30p.m.

SPECIAL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY: William Nimons, president

I. OPENING

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll Call - Mr. Nimons called a quorum.

| MEMBERS OF THE BOARD | PRESENT | ABSENT | LATE |
|-------------------------------|---------|--------|------|
| MS. FRANCES DIGIORGI | X | | |
| MR. JOHN IZZO | X | | |
| MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO | X | | |
| MR. WILLIAM NIMONS, President | X | | |
| MR. CHRISTOPHER PHIPPS | X | | |
| MR. JOE JEANETTE | X | | |
| MR. VINCENT SCARLATA | X | | |
| TOTAL | 7 | 0 | 0 |

II. Discussion and possible action upon sending an “intent to sue” letter to the City of Ansonia.

Discussion: Mr. Nimons opened the meeting and invited a discussion. Mr. John Izzo began, stating at a previous meeting regarding this topic, he suggested and the Board agreed, there should be an informal discussion first with Attorney Marini. Mr. Izzo said he called Attorney Marini to inform him Attorney Dorsey would be contacting him and as of today, attorney Marini did not receive a call. He suggested the Board wait until there is a discussion and again hold off on any law suit against the city. He said it would set precedence state wide and he believes it will just cause negative press with the city and the Board of Ed. He suggested seeing if there is something to be discussed offline before making a dramatic threat. Mr. Izzo said he thinks it would cost a lot of money and be detrimental to the kids. Mr. Phipps added he also would have hoped a conversation would have taken place but he believes Mr. Dorsey has been on vacation. He states he does not want a lawsuit either but he disagrees. He said what he believes will hurt the kids is the funding. He reminded the Board we are again being flat funded and this will be the 2nd year in a row. He says we cannot operate the schools like this. Mr. Phipps said this is what will be a direct effect on the kids. Mr. Scarlata added he has concerns about the false comments that are being put out in the press. He states there is an article of the denying that the \$600,000 is even being taken away. Mr. Izzo says with a discussion, it may be possible the funds can be put back but his concern will be how much will actually be going back to the kids. Superintendent Merlone added without the \$600,000 there will not be staff for the kids. She also mentioned the \$31.8 was inaccurate in the article that was posted and the city should retract and get the story straight. Without the \$600,000 it is \$31.2. She said every single penny is going to affect the kids. Mr. Izzo says he is not in favor of suing the city and personally believes they would be fighting a battle they cannot win. Mr. Phipps said he understands our city as well as all cities are not doing well but the Board cannot go back to 16-17 numbers. Mr. Nimons added there are three options and he has a written resolution that will be read. Mr. Nimons said he does agree with Mr. Izzo, and would like the talk to the city. Mr. Nimons added he does not need misinformation in the press. He said there are comments from the city that the teachers are overpaid when our staff is at the very bottom of the totem pole. Superintendent Merlone said she has seen education going down the drain since she has been here. Mrs. DeLibero asked whose idea was the lawsuit against the city of Ansonia. Mr. Nimons answered the attorney gave three options for the Board. He also added the problem is the city rescinded our increase from last year in January. He said he spoke with the comptroller and was told the funds would have to be made up with Alliance funds. Superintendent Merlone said this cannot happen, that would be illegal. Mr. Izzo added he is concerned with the cost of a lawsuit. Superintendent Merlone added if the budget needs are not met each one of the Board members will be liable. Mr. Phipps said the key is the money was wrongfully taken. Mr. Izzo said if Attorney Dorsey gave a legal opinion of commencing an action against the city it is bad legal advice and he thinks

he has given the Board bad legal advice in the past and this is probably the worst. Ms. Lisa Jones spoke of the prior meeting regarding the statement from Attorney Dorsey about a process that should have been followed. She also talked about the Act 17-22 that does allow a city to adjust a budget but could only be done with the amount that the state adjusted. Ms. Jones said Attorney Dorsey was sharing the information, not suggesting what the Board should do. Mr. Phipps said he understand the state made cuts and he thinks it would be reasonable for the Board to have to share the burden with other departments or closer to the 1/3 of the city's budget that the Board takes up. Mrs. DE Libero added if the money was given to the Board of Ed, will it not go for raises but directly to the children. Mr. Phipps answered the funds have already been budgeted. Superintendent Merlone said the money is like paying household expenses and the bills have to be paid. Mrs. DeLibero says she can understand, but if the Board has this money and then just outright gives it to raises, she does not agree. Mr. Jones added the contractual raises were put in the budget last year and have been paid since. Mr. Phipps added, when talking raises, Public Works gets raises, Police Department and City Hall also received raises. Ms. DiGiorgi explained how the lump sum of money that was in our budget and was allocated will be going to all areas in education as well as raises. Ms. DiGiorgi was asked to read the proposed statement (Attachment #1). Mr. Phipps added what he is hearing in the resolution is there is first going to be civil conversation and the very last resort will be a lawsuit. He also asked who will be discussing. Mr. Nimons answered Mr. Dorsey and Mr. Marini and he would also like to be present. Mr. Phipps asked if there will be a time limit before any action takes place. Mr. Izzo asked why Mr. Dorsey did not reach out to Mr. Marini when he suggested it. Superintendent Merlone answered she called Mr. Dorsey today to find out why and she said he is out of state on vacation. Ms. Jones said this was just last week the initial meeting took place. Mr. Izzo said he is surprised with something so critical, Mr. Dorsey would not have reached out to put something in the calendar. He also said he is on the record; he will not support this motion of legal action against the city. Mr. Phipps added he would like to see a time frame with the conversation. Mr. Nimons said before April 20th there should be effort to try and resolve. Mr. Scarlata said he thinks the resolution is very reasonable since there will be every effort to come up with an agreement. Ms. Jones reminded the Board she is making sure the district is being financial responsible and making every effort to review all spending. Mr. Izzo added that is exactly why he is against the bus contract. He said she will not convince him that awarding a spending of \$65,000 over two years was being prudent in her spending.

Motion: To follow through with the resolution that was read with a date of April 20th for the deadline.

| | MOTION | YES | NO | ABSTAIN |
|-------------------------------|--------|-----|----|---------|
| MS. FRANCES DIGIORGI | 1 | X | | |
| MR. JOHN IZZO | | | X | |
| MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO | | | X | |
| MR. WILLIAM NIMONS, President | | X | | |
| MR. CHRISTOPHER PHIPPS | | X | | |
| MR. JOE JEANETTE | | X | | |
| MR. VINCENT SCARLATA | 2 | X | | |
| TOTAL | | 5 | 2 | 0 |

Mr. Nimons said by April 20th, the Board will reconvene after the meeting with Attorney Dorsey, Attorney Marini and Mr. Nimons is held.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 8:03pm.

| | MOTION | YES | NO | ABSTAIN |
|-------------------------------|--------|-----|----|---------|
| MS. FRANCES DIGIORGI | | X | | |
| MR. JOHN IZZO | 1 | X | | |
| MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO | | X | | |
| MR. WILLIAM NIMONS, President | | X | | |
| MR. CHRISTOPHER PHIPPS | | X | | |
| MR. CARMEN PITNEY | | X | | |
| MR. VINCENT SCARLATA | 2 | X | | |
| TOTAL | | 7 | 0 | 0 |

Respectfully submitted,

Cassie Venson
Recording Secretary
Date 04/06/2018