

ANSONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION

MINUTES

PLACE: ANSONIA HIGH SCHOOL, Media Center **DATE:** 13 June 2018 **TIME:** 6:00 P.M.
MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY: Fran DiGiorgi, vice president

- I. **OPENING**
- A. **Pledge of Allegiance**
- B. **Roll Call – Ms. Fran DiGiorgi called a quorum**

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD	PRESENT	ABSENT	LATE
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO	X		
MS. FRAN DIGIORGI	X		
MR. JOHN IZZO	X		
MR. JOE JEANETTE	X		
MR. WILLIAM NIMONS, president		X	
MR. CHRISTOPHER PHIPPS	X		
MR. VINCENT SCARLATA	X		
TOTAL	6	1	0

- II. **Public Session–**
Ms. DiGiorgi read a disclaimer for anyone wishing to speak during Public Session.

Ms. Ebony Tindle, 34 Liberty Street addressed the Board. Ms. Tindle stated she is a member of a Parents Group that is supporting Superintendent Merlone and presented a petition supporting Superintendent Merlone. She spoke of the beliefs that she and she said many others in support of Superintendent Merlone share and wanted to thank Superintendent Merlone and the Board of Education for also doing their best to try and give the children the best education they deserve. She said there are many, many parents that feel the same but do not want to speak publically due to the backlash. Ms. Tindle submitted the petition and Superintendent Merlone thanked her and all the people involved. Superintendent Merlone also said she is here to continue to help the children. Ms. Tindle thanked the entire Board.

Mr. Frank DeLibero, 7th ward Aldermen, congratulated the students receiving their awards tonight. He stated unfortunately, he was here for a more serious matter. Mr. Delibero explained there was an incident the night of the last Board meeting where the press was interviewing and the woman used for Marketing for the Board of Ed addressed a comment made by a gentleman from the public. Mr. Delibero said the way she addressed this man was not appropriate but he let it go and did not want to cause more tension or stress. Then the day the public hearing was taking place, Mr. Delibero said he saw the same woman and wanted to mention the inappropriate behavior. He said he told her the comment she made was not called for and she began to get even more inappropriate and made comments that were totally unacceptable. Mr. DeLibero did not want to go into detail in front of the public. Superintendent Merlone said she will speak with Mr. Delibero in private as well as call CAPPs tomorrow and it will be addressed.

Mr. Javier Arguello, 139 Jewett Street, addressed the Board and the public. He shared his sadness of all the constant bickering throughout the town. He also reviewed an article written about him from a Georgetown University newspaper to show that education and arts unequivocally allow students to better themselves. He also said it upsets him to see the anger and uncaring people of the city who do not care about educational and art programs having to be taken away. He said he was a product of the success and it makes him emotional that people who have not been involved with the schools are making decisions to not fund for the future, which is our children. Mr. Arguello said he believes what is happening in the town is hurting the kids and cutting the arts will only make things worse. He said thanks to the opportunity Ansonia High School gave him, he has gained recognition for his success. He thanked everyone for listening.

Mrs. Nina Phipps, 60 Rockwood Ave, stated she has a statement as well as two questions. She first wanted to mention she was literally at a loss for words after speaking with Mr. Delibero regarding the incidents with the person he spoke of. She continued by thanking everyone involved with the budget process, the elected officials and volunteers that do the work without getting paid. She reminded the Board there was a suggestion for all members of the Board of Ed as well as the Board of Aldermen to go into the schools and see what goes on daily. She said she is a mentor to a child and it has made a tremendous impact and the members of both Boards should schedule a visit in the fall together. Mrs. Phipps asked for some clarification and a comment regarding the ACES Open Choice Program where children from New Haven can attend our schools. She said the state reimburses something, she is not sure of the amount. She said there are expenses in a line item for this program. She asked if the Board can look into the details and if it is a volunteer program, can it be shut down if we are having to put funds into the program. Another question she asked is regarding MBR. She stated this is something this is brought up often and the fact that we cannot get less than the prior year. She is asking if that is on the total dollar amount from both city and state contribution. Also, Does the NBR apply to the full amount or just the city amount or both city and state amount? Attorney Dorsey answered it is on the whole amount appropriated by the Board of Aldermen. This includes the part that is funded by the state. Mrs. Phipps asked that the Board of Education take the budget that was given by the city and look with a fine tooth comb, line by line looking for anything that might be found to reduce other than teachers and these kids. She asked to do due diligence and look really, really hard into details. She thanked the Board.

Mrs. Bridget Calabrese, president of Ansonia Administers Organization, she said wanted to provide a statement of support on behalf of all her colleagues to Superintendent Carol Merlone and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Joe DiBacco. She read a statement thanking them for their continued support and faith for the entire Ansonia School District and community in light of all that is going on around us.

Jennifer Fasciano, Ansonia resident, wanted to thank everyone on the Board of Ed who are supporting the children and have been fighting for the budget. She also wanted to say she wished people would pay attention to what is going on and what is happening in the schools. She said there are a lot of good things that need to be noticed. She mentioned the AP classes that were brought to the high school by Superintendent Merlone and how they help parents with college costs. She thanked Superintendent Merlone for always being there to help and support our schools as well as her student.

Mr. Matt Hough, president of the Teachers union. Mr. Hough thanked the Board for fighting for the teachers and putting so much work into the budget. He also wanted to thank the parents for all of their support. He said he got a lesson on unemployment costs, stating it is not just a cut in costs but the expense of paying all of the unemployment for the staff as well. Mr. Hough said he does not want to lose teachers or any other staff. He also added to please go through every dollar and be creative because they cannot run a school system with the staff that may be left. He stated the teachers have been through a lot and we will lose many, many staff because there cannot be a \$2 million cut in the budget and expect teachers to stay with those kinds of conditions.

III. RECOGNITION

- A. Naomi Ortiz, 6th grade Prendergast School, was presented an award by Superintendent Carol Merlone for the VITAHLS Healthy Cooking Challenge.
- B. Ms. Lori Pozuck was presented an award for 35 years of service to the Ansonia Public Schools.
- C. Ms. Joyce Seccombe was presented an award for 30 years of teaching service in the Ansonia School District
- D. Ms. Betty Tuccio was presented an award for 25 years of service to the Ansonia Public Schools.
- E. Ms. Amy O'Brien was presented an award for 25 years of teaching and administrative service to the district
- F. Kaitlyn Caple, 11th grade, was presented an award for Student Board of Ed member.
- G. Gary Reeves, 12th grade, was awarded for his service as a Student Board of Ed member.
- H. Board of Ed member and member of Valley Association of Realtors, John Izzo, presented two awards. Mr. Izzo said every year the Association chooses two valley high school students who qualify with certain criteria. This includes, scholar student, enrolled in higher education, financial need and submitted essay. Mr. Izzo presented first recipient, Saimin Shamin, who will be attending UCONN School of Business. She is very involved with the community, a scholar student and a member of numerous clubs in the high school. Mr. Izzo then presented Justin Stewart, who will also be attending UCONN in the fall. has attained high honors and second honors over multiple semesters throughout high school, he won the SAT excellence award, and is proud member of Boy Scouts, an Eagle Scout and won several other educational awards. Mr. Izzo congratulated the winners for their great job.

At this time Ms. Digiorgi asked the Board to make a motion to add item C to Action Items on the agenda, allowing Superintendent Merlone to distribute potential lay-off notices to staff.

MOTION: To allow Superintendent Merlone to distribute potential lay-off notices to affected staff.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN

MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO		X		
MS. FRAN DIGIORGI		X		
MR. JOHN IZZO		X		
MR. JOE JEANETTE		X		
MR. WILLIAM NIMONS, president				
MR. CHRISTOPHER PHIPPS	1	X		
MR. VINCENT SCARLATA	2	X		
TOTAL		6	0	0

IV. Action Items, consideration of approving:

- A. Accepting BOE meeting minutes dated May 16, 2018(regular) minutes.

**MOTION: To accept minutes dated
May 16, 2018 (regular) meeting**

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO		X		
MS. FRAN DIGIORGI		X		
MR. JOHN IZZO	1	X		
MR. JOE JEANETTE		X		
MR. WILLIAM NIMONS, president				
MR. CHRISTOPHER PHIPPS	2	X		
MR. VINCENT SCARLATA		X		
TOTAL		6	0	0

- B. Permission for Superintendent Merlone to hire certified staff during summer months.

MOTION: To give Superintendent Merlone permission to hire certified staff during the summer months.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO		X		
MS. FRAN DIGIORGI		X		
MR. JOHN IZZO		X		
MR. JOE JEANETTE	2	X		
MR. WILLIAM NIMONS, president				
MR. CHRISTOPHER PHIPPS	1	X		
MR. VINCENT SCARLATA		X		
TOTAL		6	0	0

- C. Permission for Superintendent to provide applicable layoff notices to effectuate the 2018-2019 budget reduction from the Board of Aldermen.

Mr. Scarlatta asked if the Board office did what was requested and took each and every line item to try and save as many positions as possible. Superintendent Merlone said they have been doing just that and it will be impossible to maintain on \$31.2 million without staffing being cut. She also added we are not only down the number of staff but we also have to pay for their unemployment. Mr. Phipps asked if it will not just be staff cuts but other departments as well. Superintendent Merlone confirmed. Mr. Phipps asked Mr. Hough if he had any definite staff members leaving that would give some extra money to the budget. Mr. Hough said he does not. Mr. Scarlatta asked Attorney Dorsey if there is legally anything that might be able to be done for the next year's budget. Attorney said there may be another legal action that may be filed but it will have to be after it is clear what exactly will be affected. Mr. Phipps asked, with all the issues and disagreements going on, if there is any chance the state may step in if Ansonia is not compliant with certain things like student/teacher ratio, class sizes or services being met that would force financial benefit. Attorney Dorsey answered it may be possible, he said there is a provision in the state statutes under section 10-4B of the general statutes that allows any taxpayer in the community, to file a complaint with the State Department of Education indicating that they feel the funding level may not be able to implement appropriate education. He continued saying the state has stepped in and made orders. He said it is a hearing type of situation that would be decided by the court. Mr. Izzo asked if there have

been discussions with Mr. Hough and other leaders to get their input and see where it can least have an impact on staffing. Attorney Dorsey said conversation has been ongoing and will continue.

MOTION: To regretfully give permission to Superintendent Merlone to distribute potential lay-off notices to affected staff.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO		X		
MS. FRAN DIGIORGI		X		
MR. JOHN IZZO		X		
MR. JOE JEANETTE	2	X		
MR. WILLIAM NIMONS, president				
MR. CHRISTOPHER PHIPPS	1	X		
MR. VINCENT SCARLATA		X		
TOTAL		6	0	0

V. Informational Items.

A. Assistant Superintendent's Report

Attachment #1

Dr. DiBacco said he presented a spreadsheet that showed the attempt for a savings in Special Ed Transportation. He said he met with ACES regarding the costs and we do very well. He also spoke about the Cambridge Review and the first part of the process. The Special Ed review is still taking place and neither review has been handed in as of yet. Dr. DiBacco also talked about an ACES grant that was submitted and he will keep us posted with the results. He also wanted to acknowledge the SATs scores that have gone up 32 points. There were gains in both Language and Math. He thanked the community for all the support and the teachers' hard work as well.

B. Special Education Director's Report

Attachment #3

Ms. Gabrielson wanted to commend her assistant, Mrs. Liz Ovesny for the hard work on going out to get numerous bids for the Special Education Transportation. She also talked about the new IEP system implementation and said Vinny Pastore and she have a conference call set up with the current as well as new provider to plan the migration of data from one to the next. She said they should be online the beginning of July and the cost savings for next year will be \$10,000. The year after, the savings will be approximately \$4000. The funds come from grant funding. Ms. Gabrielson wanted to share that one of the outplaced students will be graduating this year and will attend a four year university. She said the effort of her parents and Special Education staff are partly responsible for the success. Ms. Delibero asked about the portables at Mead School, and how many students total are occupying them today. Ms. Gabrielson said four years ago the proposal was written for two classrooms of eight students per class. These were going to be students returning from out of district placement. She said there were also two pre-kindergarten classrooms with fourteen regular and special ed students in each classroom. Ms. Gabrielson said at that time they were running out of room to place special ed pre-k students so they were outplacing these children for pre-kindergarten. The other two classrooms were going to be regular kindergarten classrooms. She said this year there was only staff funding for one classroom. Ms. Gabrielson said there are five students in that one classroom and five will be returning with three outplaced students to come back into district. Mr. Phipps asked if there are eight students in the room now, why aren't there more back in these classroom? Mr. Izzo stated we most likely will not see the savings that was expected when the proposal was put in to place. Mr. Phipps asked if we don't have the resources in district, it would be cheaper than \$80,000 to bring in the resources and we would see a savings. Ms. Gabrielson said this may be possible but the staff and funding for the staff need to be put in place before the student comes back in district. She said there were three children that were eligible to come back and one in the fall. She said there are also two at Mead School that may qualify to attend in the fall. Mr. Izzo asked if there was any information Special Ed was able to give Cambridge for their study. Dr. DiBacco answered that they are going through the services and redundancies and the entire budgetary process is quite exhausting. He added they are trying to go through the entire budget.

C. Technology Report

Attachment #4

Mr. Pastore reported the implementation of new and replacement computers and chrome books in all of the schools. Mr. Pastore said the replacements are all funded by grants.

D. School Business Administrator Financials

1. **2017-2018 Year-to-date** - Ms. Lisa Jones began by explaining the handout of the projected salaries through June 30th. She said the amount is large due to the end of the year balloon payment. Ms. Jones said there are approximately 195 staff members that will be receiving this. She also said the projection of being within the original budgeted amount after the agreement with the Board of Aldermen. She said there will be an adjustment and they are going to look at the actual open purchases. She said they are not currently approving any new purchase requests unless necessary orders. Mr. Phipps asked if reading the projection correctly, does it state there is still a deficit in the budget after the agreed \$500,000 amount

with the Aldermen? Ms. Jones confirmed, that is assuming that all the expenditures were done correctly on the sheet and we are trying to do the work to ensure we live within the budget. She also said she continues to look at savings within the whole budget that was provided to the Board of Ed. Mr. Izzo asked if she has been able to identify any area or line item that can be either reduced, eliminated or even increased for savings. She answered that since she has spent time training the newly hired accounts payable person, she sees the biggest change that will help in all areas is the processes. She thinks the opportunities to tweak the process and do some things different will show some savings. Mr. Phipps asked if the breakdown of the purchase services line item can be shown. He stated since it is a \$1.4 million item, he thinks it would benefit the Board to see and he would like to see it anyway. He also asked if they will see a breakdown of the line items from the \$31.2 million budget. Mr. Phipps said he would like this to see exactly where the cuts are. He also asked when that will happen. Ms. Jones said it will happen before the end of this fiscal year. She said the thing that is going to help decide where the biggest cuts are will be after seeing the purchases that will be left in the budget and what of the \$500,000. He said he is asking about the 18-19 budget. Ms. Jones said once the current budget is closed then it will be clear for next year's. Mr. Scarlata said he is still stuck on the portables subject. He asked Ms. Jones if the city understands that the reason why the project hasn't moved forward is due to lack of funding. Ms. Jones said she can confirm it has been communicated to them. Superintendent Merlone said there was an amount asked for to complete the project and it was not fully funded. Ms. Jones said it is her understanding they do not have the funds either. Mr. Phipps said the savings bringing the students back will be well worth the investment. Ms. Gabrielson said she has communicated this several times regarding this project.

2. Athletics –

Attachment #5

Mr. Tom Brockett, Athletic Director said spring sports have concluded, everything went well.

3. Food Services –

Attachment #6

Mr. Dominic Golia, Director, informed the Board there has been several purchases made for the outdated or nonworking equipment in the schools.

Mr. Phipps wanted to thank all staff involved in the entire process that has had to take place, stating how difficult it must be. He said the incredible stress of trying to make the numbers work must be gut wrenching.

4. Grants and other income –

Attachment #6

Superintendent Merlone told the Board any question can be directed to her office and will be answered.

E. Enrollment

Attachment #7

Superintendent Merlone read the report

F. Youth Family Outreach Summary -

Attachment #8

Mr. Robert Lisi gave his report. He said he wanted all to hear there were 397 students move in this year which is 100 more than last year. Of that total, 222 were from the same or lower reference group than Ansonia. This is a 57% increase. In addition, 24% of these students are Special Ed. He said this makes it extremely difficult for teachers to do their job. He said the number of multi-family homes with absent landlords is out of control

G. Notes from the Desk of the Superintendent

Attachment #9

Superintendent Merlone gave her report and summary of the newsletter that was handed out. She wanted to thank everyone. She said they are going to celebrate the year end and graduation. Superintendent Merlone congratulated the top ten students for all their hard work from kindergarten on to their senior year in high school.

H. Additional; Administration or Board of Education

Mr. Izzo asked to address a question regarding the PR firm that was hired. He said in light of all the comments that have been made at the meeting as well as in the public and online, he wants to know the details of this firm that was hired to make a video as well as schedule a press conferences and public appearances. Mr. Izzo also added, he would ask it come before the full Board for a vote before hiring a public relations firm in the future. Mr. Izzo said they have Ann Baldwin, who is a former news anchor at Channel 30 and one of the most unprofessional people in public relations that he has met. He said her behavior was unacceptable and should not be the face of the Board of Education. Dr. Dibacco said this was supposed to be for marketing. He apologized and said the person was referred to them by several clients including CAFE. This video that was to be created was supposed to be informative and positive. The person wanted to come in and get a feel for the Board of Ed which happened to be in the middle of the situation that is happening at this time. Dr. DiBacco said he never could have imagined that retaining a recommended person to create a marketing video to promote the district, would turn out so negative. He said the reality of the entire process was to attract high quality candidates to work in Ansonia. Mr. Izzo said he is not sure if she was there for a video but he knows she was there for a very specific reason which was to show the position of the Board of Education against the city. He said she was not here to shoot a video for the past few weeks. Mr. Izzo said she single handedly shed a very negative light on the city of Ansonia and shame on any person who promoted her and asked she not be around in the future.

VI. Executive Session re: Expulsion.

MOTION: To enter into Executive Session at 7:55 p.m. for the purpose of conducting expulsion hearing and further invite Superintendent Merlone into Executive Session.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO	1	X		

MS. FRAN DIGIORGI		X		
MR. JOHN IZZO	2	X		
MR. JOE JEANETTE		X		
MR. WILLIAM NIMONS, president				
MR. CHRISTOPHER PHIPPS		X		
MR. VINCENT SCARLATA		X		
TOTAL		6	0	0

To return to regular meeting.

VII. Action as needed. As a result of Executive Session.

MOTION: To accept Superintendent Carol Merlone's recommendation.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO		X		
MS. FRAN DIGIORGI		X		
MR. JOHN IZZO		X		
MR. JOE JEANETTE		X		
MR. WILLIAM NIMONS, president				
MR. CHRISTOPHER PHIPPS	1	X		
MR. VINCENT SCARLATA	2	X		
TOTAL		6	0	

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO		X		
MS. FRAN DIGIORGI		X		
MR. JOHN IZZO		X		
MR. JOE JEANETTE		X		
MR. WILLIAM NIMONS, president				
MR. CHRISTOPHER PHIPPS	1	X		
MR. VINCENT SCARLATA	2	X		
TOTAL		6	0	

Respectfully submitted,



Cassie Venson
Recording Secretary
Date 06/18/2018