

ANSONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION

PLACE: Meeting held at Mead School Cafeteria, 75 Ford Street, Ansonia, CT 06401

DATE: 12 March 2025 **TIME:** 6:00 p.m.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY: Mr. Rich Bshara, President.

I. OPENING

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. **Roll Call** – Mr. Bshara called a quorum

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD	PRESENT	ABSENT	LATE
MR. RICH BSHARA, president	X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO		X	
MS. STEPHANIE OCASIO-GONZALEZ		X	
MR. DAVID KNAPP	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE	X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS	X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK	X		
TOTAL	5	2	0

II. Public Session

There was no one from the public who wished to address the Board.

III. Action items, consideration of approving the following items:

A. **Ansonia Board of Education meeting minutes dated February 19, 2025 (regular).**

MOTION: To accept meeting minutes dated February 19, 2025.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president		X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO				
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP	1	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE		X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK	2	X		
TOTAL		5	0	0

B. **Healthy Food Certification Statement for the 2025-2026 School Year.**

Mr. Kevin Benham explained the yearly votes required by the state for the Food Service Department.

Mr. Bshara also spoke to the Board about the yearly certification for the Food Service Department. Ms. LaBerge read the Healthy Food Certification Statement:

“Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Ansonia Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.”

MOTION: To accept the Healthy Food Certification pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Ansonia Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president		X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO				
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP	1	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE		X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK	2	X		
TOTAL		5	0	0

Ms. LaBerge read the second required vote:

“The Ansonia Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met:

- 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend;
- 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and
- 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales.”

MOTION: To accept the Healthy Food Certification and further, that The Ansonia Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met:

- 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend;
- 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and
- 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president		X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO				
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP	1	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE		X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK	2	X		
TOTAL		5	0	0

C. Ansonia High School Roofing Project

Mr. Evans said the project has been ongoing since 2018. He told the Board the project was bonded in 2019, and is coming to fruition with an application to the State. Mr. Evans said they need to get approval before going for a plan review. He said the review has been scheduled for April 7th with the State. He said after that, the goal will be to get the project out to bid the following week.

Mr. Bshara said the engineers were going to attend the meeting but he didn't think it would be necessary.

Mr. Evans said after today's approval it will go before The School Building Commission, which will meet next week.

Ms. LaBerge read the following language regarding the Roofing Project:

"We hereby certify that these final plans and project manual(s) as prepared for bidding and dated January 8, 2025, and the professional cost estimate, completed in accordance with Level 3 of ASTM International Standard E1557, Standard Classification of Building Elements and Related Sitework- UNIFORMAT II for this project, dated January 8, 2025, have been reviewed and approved for this project on the dates shown above."

MOTION: To approve plans as presented and agree to the following statement:

We hereby certify that these final plans and project manual(s) as prepared for bidding and dated January 8, 2025, and the professional cost estimate, completed in accordance with Level 3 of ASTM International Standard E1557, Standard Classification of Building Elements and Related Sitework- UNIFORMAT II for this project, dated January 8, 2025, have been reviewed and approved for this project on the dates shown above.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president		X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO				
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP	1	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE		X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK	2	X		
TOTAL		5	0	0

Mr. Bshara asked to have a vote to add an Action Item at the end of this meeting regarding next year's budget.

MOTION: To add an Action Item to the end of tonight's meeting, regarding the 2025-2026 Budget.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president		X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO				

MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP	1	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE		X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK	2	X		
TOTAL		5	0	0

IV. Informational Items.

A. Student Representatives

The student representatives were not at tonight's meeting.

B. Assistant Superintendent's Report

Mr. Bergin greeted the Board, he said they are in the final stages of implementing The Vision of a Graduate. He said there has been a lot of work on this project and what they would like to see in our graduates. He talked about the key components which involve walk throughs and collaborating. Mr. Bergin said the next meeting will be held on March 30, where they will introduce a roll out presentation. He said they moving toward the end of school year and will be using the month of April and May for final touches for this school year and preparation for next school year. He said administrators have completed their mid-year meetings and he and Dr. DiBacco are completing their mid-year meetings. He said once that is complete they will adjust and plan for next year. He said school improvement plans for each school are happening and will share when complete. He said he is very happy to report Mead School teacher Shannon Allison was recently made Extraordinary Educator by The Connecticut Association of Schools for her innovative math teaching practices. He said she was only one of two teachers in the entire state, and there were only 28 chosen in the entire country. He said she will be networking and attending conferences in Boston this summer. Mr. Bergin said they have wonderful staff members.

Mr. Bshara said he would like to thank the Valley Indy for their wonderful article on the high school trip to China. He said it was a great article.

C. Special Education Director

Stephanie Savo greeted the Board. She gave the Board her numbers for the month. She spoke about the upcoming informational event for the community regarding the Transition Program at the high school, as well cost saving ideas that are being explored for this program. Ms. Savo said the ten outplaced students are very costly and it would be helpful for bringing them back in district. She talked about the success of the Best Buddies Program due to the commitment of students, staff and families. She pointed out the decline in outplaced numbers and the work they are putting in to that.

D. Technology Report

Mr. Pastore was not present, his report is included in the program

E. School Business Administrator Financials

1. 2024-2025 Year-to-Date

2. Grants and Other Income

Mr. Marriott said he wanted to point out the first installment of Excess Cost funds has been received. He told the Board the first payment of approximately \$1.5 million helped offset the Special Education for Public and Private tuition. He said after the back and forth regarding the State reimbursement, there should slightly under \$1 million for the second installment. Mr. Marriott said there was discussion at the last meeting regarding the copier contract. He told the Board the district decided to stay with the same vendor. He said overall there will be just under \$46,000 in savings per year and potential for more. Mr. Marriott talked about the additional savings that can happen with overage charges with the allotment.

Mr. Bshara said Erich has been working very hard on the budget. He said he thinks they have put something together something that will be presented to the City.

F. Food Service Director's Report

Mr. Kevin Benham went over his report, discussing the financial piece, as well as plans for the summer. He said they are working with Massaro Farms and going to bring fresh, local foods as well as marketing with the farm. He said he wanted to thank everyone for their vote regarding the Healthy Food Certification.

G. Athletic Director's Report.

Mr. Bshara said any questions can be directed to Mr. Brockett. The athletic report was included.

H. Enrollment

Mr. Bshara went over the Enrollment Report noting the increase.

I. Youth Family Outreach Summary

Mr. Lisi said he had a brief February report. He said he did want to mention on the week of March 3rd there were ten new registrations. He said four of these are Special Education students. Mr. Lisi said this is so difficult for teachers. He said it hasn't stopped and the numbers don't lie regarding transient students. He told the Board he continues to do home visits regularly.

J. Facilities Director's Report

Mr. Evans thanked the Board for the earlier vote. He said during February break they were able to replace and install rooftop units at the Middle School, there was a training held for the department during the recent break, also the yearly shoe truck came giving all employees a new pair of work shoes. He said now that the weather is warming up, they will begin Spring cleaning. Mr. Evans talked about the projects that will happen during April break including the replacement of fire alarms in three buildings.

K. Director of Equity and Communications Report.

Dr. Reese Morales talked about his monthly social media activity, Black History highlights in the weekly newsletter, and attending the United Way DEI Task Force Committee meeting. He said the upcoming Emergent Leaders HBCU trip has been fully funded and high school guidance counselors Ms. Nadine Crowder and Ms. Melissa Askew-Hart will chaperone and run the trip.

Mr. Phipps asked if the homeless population number was on the high side. Dr. Morales said the number is larger than usual. He said the entire state is feeling the increase of identified homeless students. He said as of today there are 25 students in the district. Superintendent DiBacco said affordable housing is a factor across the state.

L. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent DiBacco thanked the Board and said there has been amazing things happening this month, including the CAPSS Awards on March 25th. He said this award exemplifies leadership and service to the community and is one of his favorite ceremonies. He said it is great to hear about the students in our valley who are doing tremendous things. Superintendent DiBacco said he is also looking forward to the Football Championship Banquet on March 18th. He thanked Bob Evans for all the help with the roofing project. He said a lot of work has been put into the applications and the entire process. Superintendent DiBacco talked about the struggle with Excess Cost. He said Ansonia is fully funded but changes that keep coming from the state make it difficult to plan the budget. He told the Board; the exact amount of reimbursement is never set in stone and the district is forced to try and plan around this. Superintendent DiBacco congratulated the high school cheerleaders on their third straight State Championship win. He gave credit to Coach Jen McGeough and her dedication to the team. He said there was an on-site UCONN Acceptance Day at the high school. He told the Board 30 students from the high school were accepted into the university. Superintendent DiBacco thanked Beth LaBerge for the Board Policies discussion. He said they have been going through the policies and there is no need for all the old, outdated policies. He said the last time a Policy update took place was 2009. He told the Board he would be happy to answer any questions.

M. Additional; Administration or Board of Education

Mr. Bshara reminded the Board this item was moved from the agenda.

Mr. Bshara said there has been a lot of time spent on Zoom as well as in person meetings having discussions regarding the budget. He said the process began before Chuck left, and they are now trying to pick up from there. Mr. Bshara said they have done an analysis and the difference column in the report may not be accurate just yet. He told the Board some of the numbers may not have been in their place for the current year and he is asking to focus on the budget presented for next school year at this time. Mr. Bshara said the numbers from previous years are currently being shifted. He said we are looking at key items like the 5% increase in wages, medical benefits, increased utilities, and Special Education. He said the Special Education numbers for transportation and out placed students are the largest. He said we are hoping to work with companies and finalize transportation for the district soon. He talked about the requirements for transporting homeless as well as students with disabilities. Mr. Bshara said the costs are increasing due to the demand.

Superintendent DiBacco said a lot of transportation companies went out of business after the pandemic. He said the insurance for the companies are also very costly, which reflects on the district. He told the Board they know we have to send these students to their destination and he feels the prices are increasing tremendously.

Mr. Bshara said last year the state quoted a 78% reimbursement for Excess Cost. He said this year the state said it will not be 78%, it will be about 60%. He told the Board the reduced amount is a huge cut. Mr. Bshara said he has not heard if they will be adding the remaining amount into next year's budget.

Mr. Marriott explained the difficulty of trying to balance the budget while taking into consideration the declining reimbursement amount for Excess Cost and the increased cost for our Special Education.

Mr. Bshara said the amounts we are asking from the city continued to change due to the reimbursement amounts from the state. He said they will present to the city and sit to discuss. He said they will express the situation regarding the state and their reimbursement amount. He said they may be able to add it to the budget and give back if not needed. He said during the pandemic, the city was given back money from the Board of Ed because it was not all used in district. Mr. Bshara said the city gave additional the following year to help. He told the Board; the district has not gone to the city for extra funds in many years. He said the district implements a budget freeze in January to ensure this does not happen. Mr. Bshara said they are going to try and save as much as possible in every area. He said they will be submitting over \$3.5million for Excess Cost to the state for next year. He reminded the Board this is for each Special Education student that exceed \$90,000 in yearly costs. He said the system does not work in our favor due to several factors, including the transient population. He talked about grants that are no longer available, the Alliance Grant requirements, as well as other spending obstacles. Mr. Bshara said the funding amount from the state has not changed for the Alliance Grant in many years but our costs are continuing to increase.

Superintendent DiBacco said the budget can easily be increased by an additional \$1million. He said he would not ask that of the taxpayers in Ansonia. He told the Board they are trying to cut in every area that is possible. He said the grants that were available during Covid were helping ease the burden. Superintendent DiBacco said the money is no longer available. He said less than 2% is for discretionary spending. He said the remaining line items are essential and he hopes there are no other variables that come up.

Mr. Bshara said they know there is potential for referendum for this budget.

MOTION: To approve the presented 2025-2026 School Year Budget for approval.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president		X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO				
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP	1	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE	2	X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK		X		
TOTAL		5	0	0

V. EXECUTIVE SESSION regarding expulsions.

MOTION: To enter into Executive Session regarding Expulsions at 7:47p.m.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president	1	X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO				
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP		X		
MS. BETH LABERGE		X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK		X		
TOTAL		5	0	0

Return to regular meeting.

VI. Action, as needed, as a result of Executive Session.

MOTION: To accept the recommendations as presented by the Superintendent regarding expulsions.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president	1	X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO				
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP		X		
MS. BETH LABERGE		X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK		X		
TOTAL		5	0	0

VII. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 7:57p.m.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president		X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO				
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP	1	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE		X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK		X		
TOTAL		5	0	0

Respectfully submitted,

Cassie Venson

Cassie Venson

Recording Secretary

Date: 3/18/2025