

ANSONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

DATE: 13 March 2024 **TIME:** 6:30 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. OCASIO-GONZALEZ		X	
MR. DAVID KNAPP	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE		X	
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS	X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK		X	
TOTAL	4	3	0

II. Public Session

There were no comments from the public.

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

A. Grievance Hearing – Mike Kennedy

This item was heard after letters B & C.

Discussion: Mr. Kennedy thanked the Board for hearing him. He said he is here because he feels the district is not following the contract, in terms of sick days. He said there is a new policy which has guidelines that are not to be found in the written contract. He said he has asked for the new guidelines to be shown to him in writing, and it was not given to him. Mr. Kennedy said he does not feel that the written contract should or could be overwritten by something that is clearly stated in the contract regarding sick time. He read several parts of the contract regarding sick days and said the contract is not being followed with the new guidelines that are not published anywhere. He said he believes this new meeting that takes place with an administrator after absences is breaking the contract, since there is a consequence. He said he believes this meeting is taking place to intimidate teachers, and there are several in his building that won't take days in order to avoid this verbal warning. He said this is wrong and he feels it is verbal intimidation. He said he is here because he feels the guidelines are a work around the contract. He said he can show the sick time language and the lawyer cannot show language for these new guidelines. Mr. Kennedy said he would ask if the Board rules against him, to please show where in the contract it says the administration can do this.

Attorney Floyd Dugus asked the Board to refer to the paperwork that has been passed out. He said he wanted to remind the Board this is not a grievance about someone who received discipline action, it is a grievance over an interpretation of the contract. He said in this case, Mr. Kennedy has a burden to prove there was a violation. He said nobody who has a bonafide illness has been denied a single day as a result. He said Mr. Kennedy has mischaracterized what this is about. Attorney Dugus said this district administration has a perception that absenteeism is higher than it should be. He said when the teacher is not in the classroom, kids are not getting the same education. He told the Board, they have the right to police the contract and make sure people are only using sick days for bonafied illnesses. He said if it is excessive and there is a pattern, there is a right to question. Attorney Dugus said in this case, Mr. Carey along with Superintendent DiBacco wanted to give guidance to the school administration as to how to monitor this. He said he

has yet to hear the grievant meet his burden of proof. Attorney Dugus said there is no evidence that anyone has been denied use of sick days. He presented an article written by a well-known arbiter, which stated employees are sometimes under the mistaken belief that when a number of sick days are given, they are welcome to use all of them and this presents a problem. Attorney Dugus said Mr. Kennedy has failed to prove that anyone has been denied sick days. He also said no one has even requested a doctor's note in this case. He said the case is really about the administration's obligation to make sure employees are not abusing their sick time, or creating a pattern. Attorney Dugus said all that has happened here is teachers being counseled. He gave a copy of the guidelines, contract language, and stipulations to the Board; and again, gave his recommendation to deny the grievance.

Mr. Kennedy said he has the guidelines. He said it states at six days, admin will meet to discuss. He also stated words currently in the contract that are in place for this exact process. Mr. Kennedy continued to read the guidelines, explaining what he believes the intent of the guidelines, versus the contract. He said the guidelines are to be used by excused and unexcused absences. He said if he needs to prove it, how do you prove intimidation is happening. He said there is already animosity in the building between admin and teachers about this new policy, and it will only get worse.

Attorney Dugus said he thinks the comment about teachers being afraid to go to medical appointments is nonsense. He said if there is a legitimate doctor's note, no one will be denied and he maintains his suggestion to deny this grievance.

Mr. Bshara said he has a couple questions. He asked if there are other guidelines that are followed throughout the district and also not specifically written in the contract. Attorney Dugus as well as Superintendent DiBacco both said yes, there are others.

He said he is assuming it is ok to have guidelines that are outside the written contract. Mr. Bshara asked Attorney Dugus what the steps for this grievance were. Attorney Dugus said the first step was with Mr. Kennedy's administrator and then with the Superintendent. He said Superintendent DiBacco asked him to join in the meeting. He said along with Mr. Carey, they tried explaining that administrators have the right and no one is being denied a sick day. He said this meeting lead to the Superintendent denying the request and now they are at this point. Mr. Bshara asked if there is another step if the Board were to deny the request. Attorney Dugus said he will check for certain, but he believes only the union can take it to the level of arbitration.

Mr. Phipps asked if the grievance was brought to the union. Mr. Kennedy said yes, he filed the grievance with the union.

Mr. Phipps asked if the union usually files the grievance. Attorney Dugus said in this case Mr. Kennedy is doing it himself.

Mr. Bshara asked if other districts have these types of guidelines. Attorney Dugus said yes, many other districts implement rules like this.

Mr. Bshara said he understands the district's need to address a problem with attendance. He said he isn't sure the Board should be the panel to decide something like this.

Mr. Phipps said there has been no discipline, that is known. Mr. Bshara said he is assuming the problem is based on the fact of getting called in to the office, but there is no discipline action. He said he thinks the admin should be able to meet with their staff for a discussion.

Mr. Knapp said he agrees; an administrator should have the right to discuss without taking it to the next level.

Mr. Bshara asked if there was any discipline that took place. Attorney Dugus said in this case there was no discipline.

Mr. Kennedy said in closing he would request in a written response where in the contract language it gives the authority for this action.

Mr. Bshara then asked what section of the contract he is grieving. Mr. Kennedy said the section in the contract regarding sick time is not being followed. He read the section of the contract regarding sick time.

Discussion regarding the request of a written note continued, as well as misuse of sick time versus the discussion administration has in place with the new guidelines.

Mr. Knapp said if there was disciplinary action that took place he might see where there is a grievance, but this is not the case.

Mr. Kennedy requested the language that gives the authority to have the meetings, and thanked the Board.

A. Grievance Hearing – Mike Kennedy

MOTION: To deny the grievance presented by Mr. Kennedy.

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

MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK				
TOTAL		4	0	0

B. Ansonia Board of Education meeting minutes dated February 21, 2024 (regular).

MOTION: To accept the meeting minutes dated February 21, 2024 (regular).

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president		X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO	2	X		
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP	1	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE				
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK				
TOTAL		4	0	0

C. Healthy Food Certification Statement for the 2024-2025 School Year.

Discussion: Mr. Bshara read the Healthy Food Certification Statement.

Moved that the Ansonia Board of Education pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, 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, 2024 through June 30, 2025. 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.

Further moved 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: To accept the Healthy Food Certification and move that the Ansonia Board of Education pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, 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, 2024 through June 30, 2025. 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.

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	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president		X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO		X		
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP	1	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE				
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS	2	X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK				
TOTAL		4	0	0

D. Diversity Plan

Discussion: Superintendent DiBacco told the Board, districts were given a template to complete. He said the district is currently using these resources, as well as creating new ways to attract candidates to Ansonia. Mr. Charles Carey further discussed the Diversity Plan and said we are reaching out to local universities and other avenues to achieve the new diversity goal.

MOTION: To approve the Diversity Plan as presented by the Superintendent.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president		X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO	2	X		
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP		X		
MS. BETH LABERGE				
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS	1	X		
MS. VOROSCHAK				
TOTAL		4	0	0

E. A.H.S. Graduation Date – June 8, 2024

Discussion: Superintendent DiBacco said they would like to solidify the high school graduation date on this Saturday morning at Nolan Field.

MOTION: To approve A.H.S. Graduation Date, June 8, 2024 as presented Superintendent DiBacco.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president		X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO	1	X		
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				

MR. DAVID KNAPP	2	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE				
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. VOROSCHAK				
TOTAL		4	0	0

IV. Informational Items.

A. Assistant Superintendent's Report

Mr. Bergin greeted the Board, starting off by briefing on the Professional Development Committee update. He said they are working to develop the Teacher Evaluation Plan as well as the Administrator Evaluation Plan. He said the team continues to do great things and are very close to finalizing. Mr. Bergin said the plan will continue to develop year to year. He told the Board there is a visiting scholar coming from Korea beginning on Monday. He said the schedule for the visitor is really phenomenal, and unique for the district as well as our visitor. He said this may develop into a relationship for other Korean educators. Mr. Bergin also talked about the Korea Science and Research Project that began last year. He said this year; the beginning stages are happening much earlier which will allow more time and participation. Mr. Bergin said the high school is very excited about this. He told the Board about the possibility of a new Science Program Mr. LaRovera has been working on. He said they are down to two programs to be piloted. He said he will keep the Board posted.

B. Special Education Director's Report

Ms. Stephanie Savo gave her report. She talked about outplaced, as well as magnet schools. Ms. Savo explained the increase in Pre-K students being tested and qualifying for speech and language. She said that seems to be the heaviest population for the department, at this point. Ms. Savo reviewed other Special Education numbers in her report, restructuring Life Skills population, as well as activities happening throughout the district.

C. Technology Report.

Mr. Vin Pastore was not in attendance, questions are to be emailed to him.

D. School Business Administrator Financials

1. 2023-2024 Year-to-Date

2. Grants and Other Income

Mr. Chuck Carey said 75% of the Excess Cost was received in February. He said this reflects a positive balance right now, but approximately \$50,000 over budget. He talked about a transfer of funds that took place.

MOTION: To approve the budget transfers as presented.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president		X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO		X		
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP	1	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE				
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS	2	X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK				
TOTAL		4	0	0

Mr. Carey said the Grant fund spending is on track. He also said this will be encumbered by the end of September.

E. Food Service Director's Report

Mr. Kevin Benham thanked the Board for approving the Healthy Food Certificate. He explained the details of this Certification. He reviewed the financial reports for the Food Service Department, explained the spending, new equipment coming in, and the refresh that will be happening at Prendergast Cafeteria.

F. Athletic Director's Report.

Superintendent DiBacco gave a briefing on the Athletic Report, asking any questions be directed to Mr. Tom Brockett.

G. Enrollment

Superintendent DiBacco reviewed the enrollment report, there were no questions.

H. Youth Family Outreach Summary

Mr. Bob Lisi said the monthly Family Outreach business is happening as usual, he will answer any questions regarding the report presented.

I. Facilities Director's Report

Mr. Bob Evans told the Board he signed a contract for the high school roof project and a meeting is taking place. He said he has been meeting regarding Summer School plans with Sherri Marquardt, and had a meeting about the new playground plans for this summer.

J. Director of Equity and Communications Report.

Dr. Reese Morales reviewed his report, saying he has been assisting families with expulsions and translating, he attended a DEI committee meeting for Valley United Way regarding expelled students, and attended a meeting with the state concerning McKinney-Vento Protection Act.

K. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent DiBacco said he has been working with Griffin Hospital and Vernon Public Schools on the Produce Prescription Program which will provide families in need with free fruits and vegetables. He said he attended a press conference about the starting age of Kindergartners. He said he is not sure if this will change, but he needed to voice his beliefs. Superintendent DiBacco talked about the CAPSS award banquet with two of our high school students and two middle school students. He congratulated the high school cheerleaders for their back to back state championship title. He also said he shared with the aldermen details about our numbers being up. He said there is no room in the budget for the students with needs who have been moving in to the district. He thanked the Board for their support.

L. Additional; Administration or Board of Education

Mr. Bshara asked if a letter can be sent to the union and Mr. Kennedy noting what the action was regarding his grievance. Superintendent DiBacco said he will notify Attorney Dugus.

V. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA, president		X		
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO	2	X		
MS. OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP	1	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE				
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK				
TOTAL		4	0	0

Respectfully submitted,

Cassie Venson

Cassie Venson

Recording Secretary

Date: 3/18/2024