

ANSONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BOARD OF EDUCATION

REVISED Minutes

PLACE: ROBERT E. ZURAW, ADMIN. OFFICE BLDG. DTL **DATE:** 16 January 2020 **TIME:** 6:15 P.M.
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY: Rich Bshara, chair

I. OPENING

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll Call

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD	PRESENT	ABSENT	LATE
MR. RICH BSHARA	X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS	X		
MR. VINNY SCARLATA	X		
TOTAL	3	0	

II. Public Comments.

There were no comments at this time.

III. Fiscal year 2019-2020 budget.

Discussion: Mr. Bshara asked Ms. Lisa Jones if she can share more detail moving forward in the monthly reports that are presented at the meetings. He said he would like to get the break down for all line items. He also asked Ms. Jones if there are any foreseen problems for the current year. She said there are no known problems. Ms. Jones said there is a new requirement for Special Ed budget line items and their breakdown. She said this will cause budget transfer requests that she will be coming to the Board for, to comply with the new related services requirements.

Mr. Chris Phipps asked if the new financial software system is listed the current budget. Ms. Jones said it is in the current year and it is under Professional Services line item.

Mr. Bshara asked if there were any other questions regarding the current year budget. There were no other questions.

IV. Discussion and possible action regarding fiscal year 2020-2021 budget.

Discussion: Mr. Bshara asked Ms. Jones to brief the committee on where this budget stands right now. Ms. Jones said negotiations for the two major bargaining unions have just completed, as well as the administrators contract. She said these contracts are complete, but not yet ratified. Mr. Jones said this is the primary delay for putting the new budget out. Superintendent DiBacco said these two unions are meeting to ratify, but there no final number. He said the budget was created with numbers included. Mr. Bshara said the only numbers the city does not have is the Board of Education budget. Mr. Bshara said its fine if there is a contingent piece, if numbers are not final but there has to be something presented. Mr. Phipps asked when the committee can expect a budget. Ms. Jones said at this point she would be presenting the Superintendent's budget to the committee first. She said then it will go to the Board for official numbers. Ms. Jones said she can get something to the Board Tuesday of next week. Mr. Bshara said if the committee can get something Tuesday to look at that would work. He said he would like to do at least one or two meetings to discuss details and understand where the numbers are coming from.

Mr. Phipps asked for a deadline to be set for a completed budget review.

Mr. Bshara said he would think it should be by the middle of February and no later. Mr. Phipps said there will be four weeks until the next monthly board meeting, and that should be enough time to meet a couple of times to discuss the details. Mr. Phipps asked Ms. Jones what is included in the 4% budget increase beside wages and benefits. Ms. Jones said it will be mainly wages and benefits and also a new contract for transportation. She said the other pieces are increase of hourly wage and rising of substitute rate. She said tuition for Special Education is the main increase in the budget as well.

Mr. Bshara said after the budget is presented to the committee, there will be workshops set up.

Mr. Bshara asked if anyone else had questions. There were no more questions.

V. Discussion and possible action regarding teacher and administrator contracts effective July 1, 2020.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Bshara asked to get a copy of the tentative contracts. Superintendent DiBacco said everyone will get a copy once the contracts are ratified. Mr. Bshara asked how he would be able to get a copy of the contract before the union members. Superintendent DiBacco said the Negotiation Committee is the only members who see and discuss the details.

all. Bshara asked if anyone else had other questions. There were no other questions.

VI. Discussion regarding in-kind services.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Jones said she added this item to the agenda to have a discussion to see where the committee would like to go regarding the “Valentine’s Day Agreement” with the city. She said the paperwork that was drawn up was very specific and should be looked at. Mr. Bshara said he was probably a big part of this agreement, and he believes the Board of Education probably benefitted with it more than the city. He said the transfer of \$1.4million in Excess funds was in exchange for the \$600,000 and the Board of Ed taking expenditures. Ms. Jones said because the city is given the Excess Cost for the Board of Education’s spending, she does not think it should be tied to the In-Kind expenditures. She said whether there are the expenditures or not, if the Board of Ed over expends their budget, they will go to the city for the funds. Ms. Jones said they wouldn’t have to go to the city for the funds if the entire Excess Cost was given to the Board of Ed. She said at this time, if the board doesn’t expend, then the city gets to keep the funds. Ms. Jones said she does not believe the city is following the intent of the law.

There are no numbers as to what the Board’s share is, because the Board cannot see the numbers in the city’s budget.

Mr. Bshara said he has the history from being with the city for 30 plus years, and the intent of Excess special Ed with the city was to only pay for the normal expenses. He said the basis from the city was due to the high costs for Special Education Services that occurred over the years. Mr. Bshara said looking at fiscal year 2017, for example, the \$1.2million increase was also the same year as the “Valentine’s Day Agreement” and after looking into the data, there was a spending increase of \$2 million. He said there is about \$300,000 spent on pensions that are mainly made up of non-union Board of Education employees. Mr. Bshara said there is about \$800,000 a year spent on workmen’s compensation including cafeteria workers, and the Board of Ed is paying approximately \$20,000. Ms. Jones said he is correct, and the Board is not currently charging Food Services, but she has begun to discuss getting reports to see what the charges should be for this department. She said they will be giving them the option to go outside, or pay into this cost. Mr. Bshara said the biggest cost of city property liability is with the Board of Ed as well. Ms. Jones said she is agreeing that the Board of Ed bears expenses, and she said they should be responsible for them, but still feels they should not be tied together.

Mr. Phipps said he just wanted to remind everyone that the job at the table is to try and get the advantage for the Board of Education. He said it is the committee’s job to do what they can to advocate for the children. Mr. Phipps said from his observation that is not what he has been hearing, and it may just be habit of Mr. Bshara from the many years of experience working with the city.

Mr. Bshara said he agrees, In-kind should be discussed and be able to be put to rest. He said it has served its purpose.

VII. Medical and other benefits

DISCUSSION: Mr. Bshara said at some point he would like to meet with Brown and Brown for a discussion regarding the benefits plan. Ms. Jones said there will be a meeting scheduled with Sonja from Brown and Brown with regard to the health insurance plan.

Ms. Jones said the ACES Health Care Plan that the Board of Education has, is a collaboration with other school districts. She said the districts co together to increase the number of participants, so rates will be better. She said there is an RFP out now for the new rates. Ms. Jones said the cl are only among Ansonia members. Mr. Phipps said there was a lot of pressure from the city to open the members’ contract and go self -funded. Mr. Jones explained the current reserve process and members’ contribution to the finance committee’s members.

all. Bshara said he is concerned because the regionalization study found if there was a merge, Ansonia would have a savings in health benefit and Derby would show an increase. He said so it is saying Ansonia’s medical insurance is more expensive. Superintendent DiBacco said when the teacher’s contract was opened up, they agreed to \$1500/\$3000 deductibles. He said this is an extraordinarily low number for an self- funded plan. Superintendent DiBacco said the numbers were locked in for four years, but won’t read that way moving forward. He said he does not know what Derby has for medical. Bshara said he would like to see what the variations are with health benefits and other opti

VIII. Discussion regarding the new ledger system.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Bshara said he believes there should be a combined service for the new system, instead of paying for two complete systems. said there should be options to work together using the same system. He said when it gets to the balance sheet part of the system; it would make sense to be one. Mr. Bshara said when reporting, it would make balancing connection possible. He said it was explained that the two department would be separate but the units would be linked together.

Ms. Jones said the concerns with balancing and reconciliation with the Board of Ed compared to other city departments were discussed, and it was thought just because of past history and the capability of making changes and adjustments the two may need to be separate. Superintendent DiBacco said he thinks there needs to be some small steps forward. He said he does believe some issues may be regarding trust. He said the Board of Ed being sovereignty, separates it from other city departments. Superintendent DiBacco said it just does not function as other departments with the city.

Ms. Jones said the direction Mr. Bshara is going is understandable if all pieces are considered, for example the fact that the Board of Ed does not have the capability to write checks.

Mrs. Bshara said it would also make sense that only Board of Ed employees were making adjustments or had access to make changes to the system. He said the easiest way to get things done is to see it all and work together.

Mr. Phipps said with one system, would it give the city opportunity to log changes. Mr. Bshara said there is security and with technology there is capability to only allow certain users access to adjustments. He said we need to make sure the city and the Board of Ed have the same chart of account structure.

IX. Public Comments

There were no comments.

X. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn meeting at 7:25p.m.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
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MR. RICH BSHARA		X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MR. VINNY SCARLATA	1	X		
		3	0	0

Respectfully submitted,

Cassie Venson

Cassie Venson Recording Secretary
Date 1/20/2020