

ANSONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION

PLACE: Meeting via Zoom DATE: 09 December 2020 TIME: 6:30 p.m.
MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY: Mr. Chris Phipps, President

I. OPENING

- A. Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Roll Call – Mr. Phipps called a quorum

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD PRESENT ABSENT LATE

MR. RICH BSHARA X
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO X
MS. FRAN DIGIORGI X
MS. BETH LEBERGE X
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS, president X
MR. VINNY SCARLATA X
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK X
TOTAL 6 1 0

Mr. Phipps asked all in attendance to pause for a moment of silence for the recent passing of Mr. Carl Badamo, former President for the Ansonia Board of Education.

II. Public Session

Ms. Gina Diaz, 24 Shesby Road, grade school parent, voiced her concerns against the Remote Learning platform. Ms. Diaz compared the learning abilities of younger, Kindergarten or elementary students to high school students. She said expecting these young students to focus with undivided attention for the amount of hours in the virtual school day is not fair. Ms. Diaz said it is cruel and hurtful to their educational growth, as well as confidence to expect students to learn this way. She told the Board that parents have been cautioned to limit screen time and this goes against that belief. She said it has been expressed there will be breaks throughout the day and she believes a five minute break is not sufficient. She said the independent work is also on the computer, making no time away from the screen. Ms. Diaz said she feels this model is also not set up for the incredible, dedicated staff. She said with in person instruction, teachers will be able to tailor individual needs of their students. Ms. Diaz said the teachers deserve time away from the day to create an individualized curriculum and activities. She said she feels the staff may be overworked and unable to reach all students, despite their enormous efforts. Ms. Diaz said Ansonia is the only district in the lower Naugatuck Valley that has a learning day this long for students in grades 1 – 3. She said the reality may be that the most vulnerable students are being left even further behind. She said she is asking for the district to return to 100% cohort model with shortened days for grades 1 – 3. She said she is asking for Superintendent DiBacco and Assistant Superintendent Bergin to listen to parents' concerns in this time of chaos. Mr. Phipps and Ms. Voroschak thanked Ms. Diaz.

Mr. Brandon Rodriguez, 120 Prindle Ave, parent of an elementary student. Mr. Rodriguez said he would like to speak as a concerned parent regarding advice he has always been given by professionals to try and limit screen time for our children. He said his daughter is on the computer from 8:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. He told the Board that his family is experiencing so much stress trying to keep his young student engaged on the computer. Mr. Rodriguez said he doesn't feel the games she is asked to play are teaching her. He said in his opinion, interaction is how these students are going to learn. He said the hybrid model will be better than what is happening now. Mr. Rodriguez thanked the Board for listening. Ms. Voroschak and Mr. Phipps thanked him for sharing.

III. Action items, consideration of approving the following items

- A. Ansonia Board of Education meeting minutes dated November 11, 2020 (regular).

MOTION: To accept the meeting minutes
Dated November 11, 2020 (regular).

MOTION YES NO ABSTAIN
MR. RICH BSHARA X
MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO 2 X
MS. FRAN DIGIORGI X
MS. BETH LEBERGE X
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS, president X
MR. VINNY SCARLATA
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK 1 X
TOTAL 6 0

- B. 2021 Ansonia Board of Education meeting schedule.

Mr. Phipps said the meetings will continue on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. He said for now the Board meetings will be virtual until further notice. He asked if there were any questions.

MOTION: To accept the 2021 Board of Education Meeting schedule.

MOTION YES NO ABSTAIN

MR. RICH BSHARA X

MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO X

MS. FRAN DIGIORGI X

MS. BETH LEBERGE 1 X

MR. CHRIS PHIPPS, president X

MR. VINNY SCARLATA

MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK 2 X

TOTAL 6 0

IV. Informational Items.

A. Assistant Superintendent's Report

Assistant Superintendent Bergin said he wanted to thank Ms. Diaz and Mr. Rodriguez for their words. He welcomed them to call him and further the conversation. He said his report included new information regarding the virtual instruction model. He said there has been opportunity to further the staff in professional development on many platforms within technology. He said these are amazing tools for teachers to assist students in their learning. He said social and emotional needs has always been a main concern for him, and now more than ever it is being addressed. Mr. Bergin said the entire certified staff took a ten hour on-line course on strategies in times of uncertainty and stress. He said this course was authorized by Yale University, Center for Emotional Intelligence. He said this will give staff resources to build skills and strategies to meet the demands of our students. Mr. Bergin said included in his report are also the positive highlights that are happening all over the community as well in the district. He said this is a very stressful time and continuing as a team, along with the city of Ansonia would be great. He said he is open for any questions. Mr. Phipps said the Family Engagement Night at Prendergast School sounded great and he commended everyone involved. Mr. John Coppola, Assistant Principal, Prendergast School briefed the Board on the Family Engagement Night.

B. Special Education Director's Report

Mr. Kevin Keating, Special Education Director, said numbers of identified students are staying steady. He said staff is doing their best for consistency and productivity. He said it is being looked at to create some budget savings in specific areas of the Special Education Department. He said there is also a plan to have outside support from PCRC come in and assist with preventative needs for areas of trauma and stress when students return. There were no questions.

C. Technology Report

Mr. Pastore reviewed his report. He talked about outside internet connections and community hot spots throughout the town. He also said there are a few software rollouts as well as computer network switch replacements. Mr. Pastore said most of the costs are covered under grants. There were no questions.

D. School Business Administrator Financials

1. 2020-2021 Year-to-date

Ms. JoAnn Cegan reviewed the expenditures for the year. She explained expenses and balances. She said negative totals will most likely be covered by COVID Relief and the department continues to work on that. Ms. Cegan went over insurance claims and said the balance is going to stay under the estimated spending amount and the reserve fund continues to grow. She said fiscal year auditing is taking place for the end of the year report. Ms. Cegan said they will begin testing for the new time clock app. She also discussed the non-lapsing account and said once the audit is complete, the remaining amount will be clear. Mr. Phipps asked when the audit should be in. Mr. Bshara said there will be an extension this year.

2. Athletics

Mr. Tom Brockett said January 19, 2020 will be the soonest any of the sports programs may resume. He said there will meetings to discuss it and he will keep the Board updated.

3. Food Services – Report was given, no questions.

4. Grants and other income -

E. Enrollment

Superintendent DiBacco gave the report, there were no questions.

F. Youth and Family Outreach Summary

Mr. Bob Lisi said this last month has been busy for numerous reasons including special education concerns, residency and food distribution.

Ms. Voroschak said she really appreciates his work and Mr. Lisi said thanks goes out to the Food Service Department. He said they do a great job and he will pass the compliments along to them.

F. Facilities Director's Report

Mr. Bob Evans, Facilities Director, gave his report. He said the department continues to make repairs throughout the district. He said the custodial staff continues to sanitize the buildings and the staff steps up to any issues. He said the CFR Grant continues with many necessary items. He also said recent unexpected mishap at the Middle School caused the pre K session to end their day early. He said it was a sewer problem that was replaced and back and running the next day. Mr. Evans also reviewed several projects that continue to move along throughout the district. He told the Board the access road located at the high school has been causing much more time than necessary. He said it is becoming a big issue and would like to request a facilities committee meeting to discuss this as well as other summer projects in the works.

G. Director of Human Resources and Labor Relations Report

Ms. Rebecca Adams, Director Human Resources, reviewed her report. She said the review process of the district Policies continues, and some will be added and most updated. She said so far everything looks good and deadlines will be met. She also said it has been a pleasure getting a chance to work with staff and assist in the distance learning process. She said it's great to see staff members return to teaching after going fully remote and she is available if needed. There were no questions.

I. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent DiBacco thanked the Board. He said he wanted Mr. Rodriguez and Ms. Diaz to know their comments did not fall on deaf ears. He said he is a dad and he also experiences this is his own life. He said the district constantly evaluates the educational programs and will continue to try and do what's best. He said there will be a survey going out and he asked everyone to be on the lookout for that. He discussed the facilities needs for the district, before and after school care development for students in the area, and the recent Alliance Grant Meeting. He also discussed career pathways at the high school, as well as looking into a history of Ansonia class implementation. Superintendent DiBacco said he talked with the mayor about this class, and was put in touch with a local historian. He said meetings are taking place and he is very glad this is being looked into. He said he appreciates the continued support from the Board as well as our parents and the city in a time like this. He said he agrees with Assistant Superintendent Bergin to reach out for further discussion with concerns. Mr. Phipps asked if the Middle School Alternative Program would be similar to the high school PACE Program. Superintendent DiBacco said it can be, and will also include assisting students that have been outplaced. He said in this time of stress, he has seen throughout the entire district how everyone is stepping up. He said it can't go unnoticed the way things are getting done without even asking. Superintendent DiBacco said when they say "Ansonia Strong" it's not a jargon, it is truth and a blessing. There were no other questions. Mr. Phipps said he agrees with Superintendent DiBacco that everyone is to be commended on their support and again appreciates the comments and concerns from parents.

J. Additional; Administration or Board of Education

Mr. Bshara said he wanted to thank all the staff for doing a great job and accomplishing everything that needs to be done. He said he knows it will not accommodate everyone, but they are doing a great job. He also said he wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and happy holidays.

Mr. Phipps said he would also like to wish everyone a happy holiday and Happy New Year.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 7:26 p.m.

MOTION YES NO ABSTAIN

MR. RICH BSHARA X

MRS. TRACEY DELIBERO 1 X

MS. FRAN DIGIORGI X

MS. BETH LEBERGE X

MR. CHRIS PHIPPS, president X

MR. VINNY SCARLATA

MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK 2 X

TOTAL 6 0

Respectfully submitted,

Cassie Venson

Cassie Venson Recording Secretary

Date: 12/14/2020