

ANSONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

DATE: January 14, 2026 **TIME:** 6:35 p.m.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY: Mr. Phipps, President.

I. OPENING

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll Call – Mr. Phipps called a quorum

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD	PRESENT	ABSENT	LATE
DR. STEVEN ADAMOWSKI	X		
MR. RICH BSHARA	X		
MS. STEPHANIE OCASIO-GONZALEZ		X	
MR. DAVID KNAPP	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE	X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS	X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK	X		
TOTAL	6	1	

Mr. Phipps said before Public Session he wanted to present a token of gratitude to one of the Board's members. Superintendent DiBacco presented a gift to Mr. Rich Bshara and said he is grateful for his dedicated years serving as president. He said there have been some very interesting and difficult times that Mr. Bshara has helped them through and he appreciates it very much.

II. PUBLIC SESSION:

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

III. ACTION ITEMS and consideration of approving the following items:

A. Ansonia Board of Education meeting minutes dated December 10, 2025 (organizational), December 10, 2025 (regular), December 15, 2025 (special).

MOTION: To accept meeting minutes dated December 10, 2025 (organizational), December 10, 2025 (regular), December 15, 2025 (special).

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
DR. STEVEN ADAMOWSKI		X		
MR. RICH BSHARA		X		
MS. STEPHANIE OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP		X		
MS. BETH LABERGE	X	X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK		X		
TOTAL		6		

B. Certified Appointment, Natalie Buccino, Grade 3, Mead School.

Superintendent DiBacco said Ms. Buccino will be replacing a staff member who has left. He said Ms. Buccino has been teaching in the building for some time and is a great addition to the Mead School staff.

MOTION: To accept the certified appointment of Natalie Buccino, Grade 3, Mead School.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
DR. STEVEN ADAMOWSKI		X		
MR. RICH BSHARA		X		
MS. STEPHANIE OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP		X		
MS. BETH LABERGE		X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK	X	X		
TOTAL		6		

IV. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

A. Student Representatives

Weston Ahearn greeted the Board, she said December was Law and First Responder Pathway Month. She said many guest speakers came to the high school. Weston said there was a field trip to Southern CT State University to see their law program. She talked about several toy and food drives that took place for the holiday, a visit from State Rep. Kara Rochelle, a fund raiser for the Minds Over Tumors Fund, and a movie night for the sophomore class. Weston said both boys' and girls' basketball programs are doing great, girls are 9-1 and boys are 6-2. She also mentioned a meeting that was held for the Sikorsky Internship Program and other fund raisers that took place during the month of December.

Mr. Phipps suggested Weston and Abdalla give the Board any suggestions or what they would like to see, to make their experience better.

B. Assistant Superintendent's Report

Mr. Bergin said he wanted to briefly mention the School Climate Plans. He asked the Board to review the document at some point. He said the committee members put in a lot of time and effort. He said the Climate Plans begin with Ansonia's Vision of a Graduate. He thanked Sara Crooks for her job well done.

Dr. Adamowski asked if they are giving their own Climate Survey or the State survey that is available.

Mr. Bergin says they use their own which is a hybrid survey.

Mrs. Crooks said the survey is a consortium of questions containing both.

There was discussion regarding the survey timing and how it was created

Dr. Adamowski asked which survey the plans are based upon. Mrs. Crooks let him know it was from this past fall.

Dr. Adamowski asked to have the Board review the results of the survey.

Superintendent said they will be a part of next month's meeting.

C. Special Education Director

Ms. Fenech said her report is reiterating savings plans that are happening in the department. She talked about staff taking on some of the outsourced services we are currently using, and the benefit of hiring a multilingual evaluator.

D. Technology Report

Mr. Pastore told the Board he has ordered chrome books for the Board and they will be ready by next meeting.

E. Food Service Director's Report

Mr. Benham was not at the meeting. All questions are to be emailed to him.

F. Athletic Director's Report.

Mr. Brockett was not at the meeting. All questions are to be emailed to him.

G. Enrollment

Enrollment numbers were discussed.

H. Youth Family Outreach Summary

Mr. Lisi reviewed his report.

Dr. Adamowski asked what the frequency of the Board getting Mr. Lisi's report.

Superintendent DiBacco said the report is monthly.

Dr. Adamowski said he would like to recommend that it become an annual report. He said he isn't sure what they do with it. He said it is pretty meaningless unless you can see it over the course of the year and compare it to the previous year. He said the enrollment is similar. He said he would like to save the staff and the Board some time and that the reports become yearly reports.

Ms. Voroschak asked what the advantage of a yearly report, which they currently do get, to a month-to-month.

Dr. Adamowski said it doesn't tell whether enrollment is going up or down in general. He said the Board is a policy Board and that's how they should be spending their time.

Superintendent DiBacco said they do get a yearly report with that information.

Ms. LaBerge said they recently requested the monthly data report. She said the Board wanted to see the frequency of transient students. She said she would personally like to see it each month.

Mr. Phipps said it is informative to see each month what is happening within the district.

Dr. Adamowski said he is interested in the transiency and which school have the most. He said it is known the district has a transient problem and the Board would like to do something about it and work with the city. He said you can't get anything from a one month. He said concentration can be from one school to another or is it going up or down and the extent of the issue. He went on to explain the meaning of information the reports give.

Mr. Lisi said the yearly information is there. He said he does provide that exact yearly report.

Dr. Adamowski asked Mr. Lisi to clarify, he gave a report in September on transient throughout the 24-25 school year.

Mr. Lisi confirmed that he does give that report each year.

I. Facilities Director's Report

Bob Evans reviewed his report. He talked about a fire alarm at the Middle School, deep cleaning during holiday break, and several jobs completed by his team.

There was discussion about the 30% increase in the gas bill and brief update on the roofing project at the high school. Mr. Evans said he is hoping the roofing project will be able to begin over the summer.

J. Director of Communications & Community Outreach Report

Dr. Morales gave his report. He talked about the number of families being reached by Parent Square, gifts that were distributed to families for the holiday, expulsion numbers, and homeless update.

Dr. Adamowski asked if they can tell if a parent is actually reading the message.

Dr. Morales confirmed they can see when an email address read the notification.

Dr. Adamowski said it is a very high percentage and it shows Parent Square is effective.

Superintendent DiBacco said this tool is much more useful than the phone calls that used to go out.

Dr. Adamowski complimented on the good job with Parent Square.

K. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent DiBacco gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the budget. He said he would like the Board to look it over and get back to Mr. Phipps with any questions and there will be a meeting to further discuss. He walked through the Vision of the District and program changes. He went into great detail about the Vision Statement and Core Beliefs of the district. He also reviewed in detail the 2.4% budget increase. He spoke about the rising cost of everything as well as costs beyond his control. Superintendent DiBacco told the Board he looks to set our students up for global success. He said creating a district with community and parental involvement as well as school staff is what makes up his Core Beliefs. He said removing barriers and welcoming all students is celebrated and sets all students up for success. Superintendent DiBacco told the Board, 72% of the district's population are high needs. He said the staff is working extremely hard to support the students and their families. He said there is a vision to give each student the opportunity to go places and have experiences they were never able to. Superintendent DiBacco said our pathway programs and partnerships with colleges are what he loves. He said the district has support from many resources that make the difference. He told the Board maintaining the staff was the goal when trying to put together the budget. He said there was a lot of money spent on our literacy and curriculum programs and the staff to assist. He said with new curriculum comes training and he needs to ensure staff are supported for this investment.

He told the Board his own personal goal is to foster the college and career pathways. He said so many of our students are capitalizing on the pathways to save money on college or their career pathway. Superintendent DiBacco said it is a lofty goal but he wants to move our high needs students up 5% in literacy. He said our schools also need to be emotionally and physically safe to become the person they are. He said this will mean to fully support the SEL program we have to drive our students. He said the budget process has become more transparent, more conclusive. He told the Board they obtained budget requests from the administrative team as well as going through all other needs. He said there is not one empty classroom in any of the buildings. He said he had each administrator look at their whole building to find any savings that may be available. Superintendent DiBacco showed a timeline of the budget increases the district has gotten from the city since the year he became Superintendent. He said he knows the city tries their best. He said with the way enrollment fluctuates, it is never easy to predict with a level of accuracy. He told the Board our district is a minority majority with 72% of the population being minority, 18% being Special Ed, 72% are high needs students, and the district is CEP which allows all students to be on the free lunch program. Superintendent DiBacco said there is an administrative restructure. He said they will be reducing five administrators from the district and there will be a change in the Special Educational program to find savings. He said personnel and staffing will remain the same, other than the five, and mental health support services will not change. Superintendent DiBacco said he is worried about the large number of positions relying on grants, the growing transitional program student numbers, the homeless population increase, the rise in our bus contract, and the unpredictability in enrollment. He also talked about the line items that are the bulk of the budget. He said the rise in healthcare, Special Education, salaries, transportation and tuition are what drives the increase. He told the Board he is asking for a 2.4% increase from last year's budget. He explained the unexpected as well as expected costs that also may play a part. Superintendent DiBacco said he feels this budget is based on needs of what is important for the students and the most realistic. He thanked the Board for listening and said he hopes they take the document created by Erich and develop questions so there can be a more robust conversation at a later time.

Mr. Phipps thanked Superintendent DiBacco and asked what the difference between last month's budget that was presented 6% higher.

Mr. Marriott said it was a combination of going through the entire budget line by line, mostly healthcare and salaries, and making cuts. He said it was also working with Nicole on Special Education structure as well as cuts that could be made with outplaced or current services.

Mr. Phipps asked if there is some sort of cap on the services that have been talked about regarding outplaced students.

Mr. Marriott told Mr. Phipps that Excess cost reimbursement from the state helps but there is no cap on what can be charged to our district.

Ms. Fenech also explained some plans for savings within the Special Ed department moving forward.

Mr. Bshara explained in further detail the budget timeline. He said the higher budget numbers were during COVID and the district was able to actually give back to the city. He said the 0% was an agreement made with the city where funds were given. Mr. Bshara also said

now three years in a row with significant increase in Special Ed costs, it is much more difficult. He said the budget has plateaued and with but they are trying to decrease that number.

Mr. Phipps thanked Mr. Bshara

Dr. Adamowski said he was very happy to see the capital budget request. He said it was very well done and he knows the city is going to try to follow the charter requirement. He asked if the \$39 million is the entire budget or the local budget.

Mr. Marriott said it is the local budget.

Dr. Adamowski said he thinks they have to present the whole budget including grants to see the actual number. He said a budget combined with revenue will show the increase to be less when presented to the city. He said the public and city would get a clearer picture. He said when a year has no increase in grant funding but increases in expenditures, they will need to be asking for more from the city.

Mr. Bshara said he agrees and it is available. He said that isn't something difficult to show all amounts together.

Dr. Adamowski spoke about a charter that requires the city to present capital budget.

Mr. Bshara said as before it will be easy enough to add to the requested budget.

Dr. Adamowski said it was a good idea recommending the Board submit written questions coming from a stand point of being able to support the budget. He said the next meeting will be to further discuss the proposal and decide if the Board wants to make modifications or adjustments seeking approval on the Superintendent's recommended budget. He said that will lead to being able to stand by and support the Board's recommended budget to the city. He said he believes the mayor asked for it to be submitted around Feb 4th. He said in March it will go to the Board of Aldermen. He said there needs to be some opportunity for the public to express their opinion on the budget.

Mr. Phipps said he thinks a combined meeting with the city will work best when presenting to the public.

There was discussion when the next meeting will be held.

L. School Business Administrator Financials

1. 2025-2026 Year-to-Date

2. Grants and Other Income

M. Additional; Administration or Board of Education

No additional

V. ADDITIONAL PUBLIC SESSION:

Mr. Phipps asked if there was anyone from the public who wished to speak.

There was not.

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION regarding expulsions:

MOTION: To enter into Executive Session regarding Expulsions at 8:01 p.m.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
DR. STEVEN ADAMOWSKI		X		
MR. RICH BSHARA		X		
MS. STEPHANIE OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP		X		
MS. BETH LABERGE	X	X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK		X		
TOTAL		6		

Return to regular meeting.

VII. ACTION, as needed, as a result of Executive Session:

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

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
DR. STEVEN ADAMOWSKI		X		
MR. RICH BSHARA		X		
MS. STEPHANIE OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP		X		
MS. BETH LABERGE		X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK	X	X		
TOTAL		6		

VIII. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 8:11pm

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD	MOTION	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
DR. STEVEN ADAMOWSKI		X		
MR. RICH BSHARA		X		
MS. STEPHANIE OCASIO-GONZALEZ				
MR. DAVID KNAPP	X	X		
MS. BETH LABERGE		X		
MR. CHRIS PHIPPS		X		
MS. SHARON VOROSCHAK		X		
TOTAL		6		

Respectfully submitted,

Cassie Venson

Cassie Venson
Recording Secretary
Date: 1/23/2026