John Izzo (Co Chair)
Steven Adamowski
(Treasurer)
Lorie Vaccaro
Joseph Jaumann
Tracey DeLibero

Jim Gildea (Co Chair)
George Kurtyka
(Secretary)
Barbara DeGennaro
Tara Hyder
Ronald Luneau, Jr

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ANSONIA DERBY
TEMPORARY SCHOOL REGIONALIZATION COMMITTEE

Monday, July 23, 2018 at 7:00 p.m.
Ansonia High School

MINUTES

Co-chair James Gildea called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call
Ansonia members:

John Izzo - Co Chair	present
Steven Adamowski – Treasurer-	present
Lorie Vaccaro	present
Joseph Jaumann	present
Tracey DeLibero	excused

Derby Members:

Jim Gildea - Co Chair	present
George Kurtyka – Secretary	present
Tara Hyder	present
Ronald Luneau, Jr	present
Barbara DeGennaro	excused

Also present
Atty. Matthew E. Venhorst, Esq. from the State of Connecticut Department of Education, Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. Gildea asked if members had comments at this time.

Ms. Hyder suggested that a Good of the Order discussion be added to the end of each meeting for discussion on things related to the agenda but were not brought up for discussion and she felt a second public portion at the end would also be beneficial.

Motion by John Izzo and seconded by Lorie Vaccaro. Move that the Committee agenda for each meeting include at the end of the meeting a Good of the Order and second public portion, as recommended. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of minutes

Motion by Joseph Jaumann and seconded by George Kurtyka. Move to approve the minutes of June 20, 2018, as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Portion

Thomas Lionetti of 79 Sunset Drive, Derby spoke in favor of the purpose of this committee and for the two cities discussing the possible merger of the two school districts. He noted that as he understands the process, the final decision will be by the voters. He suggested that a survey be performed to obtain the general public consensus on this subject. He noted that historically this subject encountered opposition as each city proudly supported their individual identity. He would not want to see the lengthy process done only to have opposition at the end.

Javier Arguello stated that he graduated from Ansonia Schools in 2010. He stated that he did not oppose the aspect of regionalization but felt it his duty to bring to the public's attention that this conversation is being approached from a financial angle and he could speak to that due to his expertise in finance. He noted that both Derby and Ansonia are part of the Alliance District which means that the schools are not necessarily the best performers in educational proficiency. He encouraged the committee to look at the educational benefits of regionalizing and take a holistic approach rather than simply a monetary one. He encouraged the committee to explore the Connecticut School Finance Project, an organization that seeks to educate the community on how educational finance works. He also stressed that the committee must put aside any political stances and move forward with an impartial position on the subject.

Michael Egan said he is a 1954 Ansonia graduate. He has seen a lot of changes through the years. He thanked the members for taking on this task. He felt that the football issue of combining should be seen as building the best team in the State and it is not a big issue. He noted that we should remember that we are Birmingham.

Mr. Gildea believes that he is approaching the subject in an impartial way and it was way too early to judge what direction the discussion is headed. The committee will be looking at all aspects of this endeavor; whether it be the quality of schools, real estate, the composition of the board of education, the educational curriculum and enrollment; all with an open mind. He is very encouraged that the members of the committee are committed to this intensive undertaking and all will be moving forward with the students' best interest in mind.

Mr. Izzo understood the perception of possible bias but it must be clear that nothing is pre-determined. At the end of the 2, 3 or 4 year process it is important that the students will come first while realizing some efficiencies will be part of the project. The committee will explore the enhancement to the educational experience looking at advanced placement courses, arts, language, manufacturing and others. The goal will be for the highest caliber of education and costs will be measured as to how it makes sense in providing the best for the students. A substantial amount of research is needed and the committee will be seeking professionals to guide the flow of this process.

Goals and Objectives

Mr. Izzo distributed a draft of proposed goals to the members for purposes of discussion.

1. Improve test scores.
2. Ensure all students receive a high-quality education
3. Provide more resources to students.
4. Offer more Advance Placement courses for students and recommend additional AP courses and other opportunities with local colleges and universities to develop program tracks in such areas as manufacturing, technology, the arts, music and other cutting-edge disciplines.
5. Cut costs without sacrificing educational opportunities.

6. Eliminate duplicate functions.
7. Analyze district staff and prioritize or shift resources for use in classrooms to directly benefit children and improve academic performance.
8. Expand educational opportunities for all students.
9. Achieve new and greater shared benchmarks of excellence.
10. Be more cost-effective.

Mr. Izzo distributed a draft of proposed committees.

Finance & Administration – For both cities: Review current budgets, MBR's, perform cost benefit analysis to justify the eventual recommendation to regionalize, or to partially regionalize. Analyze district staff and prioritize or shift resources for use in classrooms to directly benefit children and improve academic performance.

Academics & Programming – For both cities: Review existing test scores, courses offered, number of students in each class room for each subject, number of AP courses presently offered, recommend additional AP courses and other opportunities with local colleges and universities to develop program tracks in manufacturing, technology, the arts, music and others cutting-edge disciplines.

Enrollment Committee – (Review current and projected enrollment through at least 2025). Note trends and plateaus for both K-6 and K-12. Review student enrollment patterns, as well as population and demographic patterns to project decreases or increases in enrollment activity. Use persistency ratios calculated from historic enrollment data to determine growth or loss in a classroom as it progresses through the school system. (Milone & MacBroom report available July 2018)

Union Contracts – Review all bargaining unit contracts noting renewal dates, pay scales and related contractual obligations by each district. Invite union representatives to be involved in the process early and gauge support for the regionalization process and its eventual findings.

Mr. Adamowski indicated that the broad goal will be to determine the feasibility of merging the two school systems in a way that creates cost savings and improves the educational program for all students. A number of things will have to be considered such as finance, enrollment and what the academic program will look like in a merged district.

Mr. Gildea agreed. From a broad prospective he felt the goal is to look at all the data with an open mind and determine whether or not it makes sense for the two districts to regionalize.

Mr. Vaccaro noted that as the cities are the smallest in the State, combining them will result in one of the smaller school districts in the State. Exploring the concept of regionalization will be for the best educational experience for the students at the most efficient cost.

Mr. Kurtyka noted that he went to high school in Florida. He has lived in Derby for years, is a retired Derby police officer and has served on the Board of Education for nine years. He sees the committee's goal as determining the best interest of the students of both districts. As a former union vice president he noted that he does not support staff reductions. He felt it important to look from the union point of view and determine the effects on staffing and explore the cost savings with the staffing in mind. He noted that Derby offered a retirement plan a few years ago that offered the tenured teachers a supportive retirement package that resulted in a savings to the district.

Mr. Adamowski noted that the committee will be looking at the experiences of other regionalized districts. The teacher/student ratios will be studied, likely maintained and possibly result in an increase. The study will look at administrative staffing. Staffing may be restructured and repurposed. Building needs will have to be assessed. All will be taken into consideration.

Mr. Gildea indicated that he has heard the public comment raising concern for predetermined notions and bias and he stated that he would not be a member of this committee or make this commitment of time if he did not feel that there was a concerted effort being made by both cities to move forward in the best interests of the districts. He noted that being early in the process it is too soon to speak beyond the broad goals and certainly the comments being received show an open-minded commitment by the members to do the rigorous work needed to bring about an informed and thorough conclusion.

Mr. Izzo concurred. He felt confident that the members are prepared to do the necessary work to do a thorough review and draw conclusions after an open-minded discussion.

Mr. Jaumann indicated that the committee is starting with a blank slate and will narrow the conclusions with guidance from educational professionals as well as through thoughtful discussions.

Ms. Hyder noted that she was uncertain where the distributed goals came from but she stressed that the committee is moving forward with an open mind. It is too early to make any decisions or substantive comments as information has yet to be compiled to lead the members to any conclusions. She noted that the local news interviewed a public official who expressed the millions that will be saved with regionalization. She felt the comments certainly premature and wanted to make it clear, on the record, that the expressed savings has not been projected as it is far too early. She stated that it is imperative that the committee present with an open-minded approach so that clear communication continues throughout the process.

Mr. Luneau noted that he has been a teacher and coach in Derby and has lived in both Derby and Ansonia. Over the years there has been interest in regionalizing and it seems to make better sense for the two districts. Cost savings and a superior education is the goal and he felt confident the committee will decide after the necessary research is completed.

<u>Review and discuss RFP for consultants</u>

A template of the Request for Proposals from the Norfolk/Colebrook Temporary Regional School Study Committee was distributed. The Scope of Services:

The qualified professional will provide consultant services to complete the following:

- Findings on the advisability (pros and cons) of establishing a regional school district including but not limited educational, financial, governance and transition factors;
- Towns to be included;
- Grade levels included;
- Detailed educational and budget plans for at least a five-year period, including projections of enrollment, staff needs and deployment, transportation and special education needs, and a description of all programs and supportive service plans for the proposed district;
- Facilities recommended;
- Estimates of the cost of land and facilities including future needs for renovation/expansion of district elementary schools;
- Recommendation concerning the capital contribution of each participating town based on statutory factors;

- Recommendation concerning the size/representation of the proposed regional board of education;
- Other pertinent matters.
- Processes and procedures for addressing existing and new collective bargaining agreements;
- Processes and procedures for naming the new regional elementary school district;
- Presentation of reports to public hearings and Connecticut State Board of Education;
- Generation of appropriate communications to the media and communities;
- Processes and procedures for the smooth transition to a single regional elementary school.

The consultant will provide a detailed cost description for completing the Scope of Services. The consultant will provide an appropriate resume and related information concerning similar projects to verify the capacity of the consultant to complete the scope of work.

The template was submitted as a starting point that needs to be adapted to this committee's instructions noting that the document cites elementary school which is not specific to Ansonia/Derby's goal. Mr. Gildea indicated that at last meeting it was expressed that obtaining a consultant early in the process was encouraged. He was hopeful to get the process moving forward quickly.

Mr. Adamowski stated as treasurer of the committee he approached the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) to discuss the oversight and management of the grant funding. He stated that their agency will serve as the fiscal agent for the grant. There are a number of budget allotments that can not be exceeded by ten percent in either direction. He noted that the $168,000 grant relieves both districts from having to pay the statutory requirement of $10 per student to perform this regionalization study. Many thanks were again expressed to Representative Linda Gentile for her efforts in obtaining this funding as well as to the Superintendents and the NVCOG.

1. Professional consulting services $107,000 will be for the main consultant(s) that serves as staff to the committee to retrieve information for the committee and will seek possible sub-consultants to ascertain certain specific information such as enrollment projections or curriculum information. Enrollment projections, legal services and other professional services will fall under this funding.
2. Architectural services $30,000 will be for assessment of all buildings in the two districts to determine their age, capacity, long term maintenance and upgrade requirements, and assisting in possible consolidations
3. Meeting expenses $31,000 for materials for the RFP, minutes, advertising, printing of the report as well as other incidental needs.

In the grant there is mention, although not specifically stated, of ACES, as potentially playing a role in the consultant search.

Mr. Izzo questioned whether the request would be a public bid, an invited bid or both.

Atty. Venhorst indicated that decision would be open to the committee.

Mr. Izzo noted the template and Mr. Adamowski felt that was a good starting point. Mr. Izzo noted that the committee needs to consider costs as there is a finite fund available to produce the consultant services findings as well as the other research needs. Mr. Gildea felt the template could be reviewed and customized. He suggested enlisting the assistance of the

Superintendents of each school district so they could be a contact point for the RFP. He hoped that the RFP process could move forward quickly. Members suggested considering Ed Advance, National Executive Services and ACES, as suggested previously.

Motion by Lorie Vaccaro and seconded by Joseph Jaumann. Move to accept the framework of the RFP from the Norfolk/Colebrook Temporary Regional School Study Committee with the co-chairs James Gildea and John Izzo authorized to customize the document to conform to the districts needs and with Dr. Matthew Conway cited as the contact person. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Schedule

Mr. Gildea questioned if a special meeting could be called for the purpose of going forward with the RFP rather than waiting for the next meeting which would be August 27, 2018.

Mr. Kurtyka felt it important to go out to bid publicly and to obtain all possible candidates. He suggested CABE may be another source. Dr. Conway indicated that CABE and ACES would likely offer similar service. Mr. Adamowski questioned the term public bid and noted it is a request for proposal for professional services. He indicated that the committee should consider the costs of a legal posting of bid verses the request for proposal and whether a candidate can located that can provide the defined services within the proposal process. He felt the intentions of the term bid as he understands what is being asked could be captured by advertising widely throughout the state. Mr. Kurtyka agreed. Dr. Conway indicated that the proposal will likely result in obtaining services at an hourly rate rather than a set fee at the beginning of the process. It would certainly be advantageous to utilize professional organizations within the State to reach out to professionals at relatively low or no cost to the committee.

Motion by Steven Adamowski and seconded by Lorie Vaccaro. Move to advertise the Request for Proposal for consultant services through the available channels within the State of Connecticut and in the event of multiple candidates that the co-chairmen will interview and recommend two candidates to the committee for interview.

Mr. Kurtyka asked that the motion be amended to three candidates. Without objection the motion was amended. Motion passed unanimously.

Members discussed the timeline of the RFP and decided that it was unlikely that there would be a need for a special meeting. The next meeting was set for August 27, 2018 at the Derby Middle School.

Update on upcoming NVCOG meeting to discuss logistics

Mr. Gildea and Mr. Izzo will schedule a time with the NVCOG to discuss the logistics of submittal and payment of bills. Mr. Adamowski felt it was a good idea and offered to join them at this consult. Mr. Gildea indicated that they will report the discussions at the next committee meeting.

Good of the Order

Mr. Gildea noted that he was pleased with the progress the committee is making as well as the commitments voiced tonight by the members.

Public Portion

Nina Phipps stated that she was pleasantly surprised by the discussion this evening. She suggested that a mission statement be drafted by the committee that could be published or distributed to the public in some fashion so that the communities can get an understanding of the process and the goals that are set by the committee.

Matt Hough of 10 Oakwood Dr, Oxford, president of the Ansonia Federation (inaudible) stressed that words matter, presumptions happen for a reason. The committee has to be very cognizant no only of the words they use but the words of elected or appointed officials. The words can have a catastrophe effect unintentionally. He appreciated what was said tonight and he wants what is best for the kids. He thanked the members for the work that they are doing.

Mike Gray of Commodore Hull Dr., Derby thanked the members for their time. He agreed that a mission statement is a good idea. Certainly it will change over time as the research is received and he agreed that it was too early to think specifically but rather they should think globally. The more information you can get out to the community, the better they will understand the process and intentions. The data collected will quantitatively and qualitatively provide the ability to determine the viability of merging the two school districts. The result will provide the students the most rigorous and qualitative educational opportunity while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Javier Arguello was very impressed with initial comments from the committee regarding staffing concerns. He felt the students and teachers should have a voice in this discussion. He agreed that words matter, that perceptions matter.

Mr. Adamowski asked if the next meeting will exclusively be interviewing the potential candidates or will there be time for other business. Mr. Gildea felt both would likely occur. Mr. Adamowski suggested that for the next meeting he would like the initial report on each district's enrollment numbers from 10/1/17 to the end of the school year and the superintendent's projections going forward. Ten year projections will be developed during the process to help in determining facility and staffing needs. Presenting available materials will help determine what outside services may be needed to develop the plan. Mr. Izzo noted that Ansonia has recently done a district wide study and the report will be available at their next Board of Education meeting. He agreed that enrollment figures will be a critical factor. Initial numbers could be helpful for the consultants.

Motion by George Kurtyka and seconded by Joseph Jaumann. Move to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted;
Karen Kemmesies