

TEMPORARY REGIONAL SCHOOL STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20, 2018 7:00 P.M.

DERBY CITY HALL

JOAN WILLIAMSON ALDERMANIC CHAMBERS

MINUTES

Matthew E. Venhorst, Esq. from the State of Connecticut Department of Education, Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Atty. Venhorst asked the committee members to state during roll call if they are a member of their town's Board of Education.

Roll Call

Ansonia Committee Members

- o Lorie Vaccaro – Present
- o Tracey DeLibero – Present – *Board of Education Member*
- o John Izzo – Present – *Board of Education Member*
- o Steven Adamowski – Present
- o Joseph Jaumann – Present

Derby Committee Members

- o Barbara L. DeGennaro – Present
- o James Gildea – Present – *Board of Education Member*
- o Tara Hyder – Present
- o George Kurtyka – Present – *Board of Education Member*
- o Ronald Luneau, Jr. - Present

Also Present: State Representative Linda M. Gentile, 104th District
Dr. Matthew Conway, Superintendent – Derby Public Schools

Atty. Venhorst said this is the first meeting of the Temporary Regional School Study Committee between Derby and Ansonia. The question is whether it would be advisable for the school districts to come together and form a regional district. Atty. Venhorst said the entire process is done by statutes of Connecticut laws. Five people from each of the two towns are appointed to a committee, which has been done. There is also a requirement that at least two people from each town's Board of Education be on the committee, which has also been done.

Atty. Venhorst said he will be available to the committee as the process goes on. The process is the committee studies this issue with the ultimate question being whether it is advisable to form a regional district. The committee will have a period of two years to prepare a report answering that question. Atty. Venhorst noted that the two year period can also be extended an additional two years. The report would then be submitted to each town and the State Board of Education. If the committee finds that regionalization is advisable and the plan is also approved by the State Board of

Education it would then ultimately go to a referendum. An affirmative vote in each town is required before the school district can be formed. Atty. Venhorst stated this is a lengthy process and this evening we're just commencing the process of examining those issues. There are other statutory requirements, noting there are nine elements that the committee is going to have to look at regarding facilities, finance, curriculum, etc... There will be numerous opportunities for public input.

Atty. Venhorst asked if any of the committee members had questions.

Lorie Vaccaro (A) asked about scheduling the meetings. Atty. Venhorst said the next item of business would be the election of officers. He said he's not really a member of the committee – he's the State's appointed consultant. Meeting dates, how often meetings are held, location of the meetings, etc... that would be at the discretion of the committee.

Steven Adamowski (A) said some of the operational issues were mentioned – facilities, budget, etc... is there a protocol that you could perhaps outline for the committee. Atty. Venhorst said all the requirements that the committee has to follow are laid out in statutes mainly C.G.S. §10-43 items one through nine. Mr. Adamowski said that is going to require staff work and asked if that is provided by the State Department of Education or would it be handled by local staff. Atty. Venhorst said it is not something that the State Department of Education does noting that he has been on a few of these committees and he has found that it is very helpful if the committee could retain someone to do the heavy lifting – report writing, etc... He said that he has seen some committees where they did not engage someone and the work is left up to volunteer committee members. The process goes a lot more smoothly if you have a consultant whose job it is to do this.

Barbara DeGennaro (D) said per C.G.S. §10-42 talks about the expenses of the committee and it says the treasurer has to be bonded. She asked if it is somebody here or is it the treasurer for the City or is it somebody that we can designate. Atty. Venhorst said by statute the committee is obligated to elect a treasurer, a chair and a secretary. So it would be somebody sitting right here at this table. Ms. DeGennaro said they would actually handle that money. Mr. Adamowski asked Ms. DeGennaro what is her understanding of the status of the grant. Ms. DeGennaro said she believes it's here as Dr. Conway is shaking his head. Rep. Linda Gentile said the amount of the grant is \$168,500. Mr. Adamowski asked if the money could be used to retain various consultants and perhaps someone to do research. Atty. Venhorst said it could – this is a lengthy process – the committee may also want to obtain legal counsel. There will be a number of issues that will present themselves and the State Department of Education will not be able to provide a legal opinion. There will be building appraisals, architects, etc... and Atty. Venhorst said he believes a consultant for purposes to shepherd the committee through the process would be foremost in his opinion.

James Gildea (D) asked if there is a list of consultants they could provide the committee with. Atty. Venhorst said the RESC (Regional Education Service Center) has six locations throughout the State, CES (Cooperative Educational Services) and ACES (Area Cooperative Education Services) are in this area. He said basically they did a Request for Proposals (RFP.)

John Izzo (A) said over the course of this process, which will be months and years we're going to do a substantial amount of research and due diligence seeking test scores, enrollment projections, finances, number of students, educational achievement, etc... Mr. Izzo asked if there would be anyone available at the State Department of Education that would assist us in securing some of this data. Atty. Venhorst said absolutely – to some extent all the resources of the State Department of Education are available to the committee. Mr. Izzo asked Atty. Venhorst how long it has been since he was involved in a regionalization committee such as this. Atty. Venhorst said when you're dealing with an existing regional district or a proposed regional district there are a couple of different processes. This committee is dealing with two towns that are not currently regionalized and they're interested in exploring possible regionalization. He said the last he handled were the towns of Norfolk and Colebrook noting the process went on for 3-4 years. Atty. Venhorst said that committee prepared a report with the outcome that regionalization was advisable. It went to referendum but did not pass in one of the towns. He also spoke how a lot of the regionalization happened in the '50's and '60's and some towns are now finding out that they no longer need to regionalize.

Mr. Gildea asked Atty. Venhorst how the committee should proceed after tonight's meeting. Atty. Venhorst said you need to establish a regular meeting schedule and also where you're going to meet. He suggested obtaining a copy of the Norfolk-Colebrook report, which he could easily provide to the committee. He said that committee broke up into sub-committees to research curriculum, finance, etc... Atty. Venhorst suggested getting a very good understanding of the nine factors in C.G.S. §10-43.

Mr. Adamowski asked Atty. Venhorst if he had any experience or advice where to begin with the nine statutory factors. Atty. Venhorst said your first question should be why you are doing this. Is it about saving money – what cost savings could be forecast? What grade levels do you want to serve? Do you want to enhance the curriculum? Ask how would a regional school system serve that goal?

Ronald Luneau, Jr. (D) said he thinks this may be the first time that two cities are coming together, which adds a lot more variables into the equation. Towns that regionalize are usually rural towns. He asked Atty. Venhorst if he knows of any cities that have regionalized. Atty. Venhorst said that's a good question – there are about 16 regional districts in the State and they tend to be focused in the smaller towns. He doesn't know of any large cities that have regionalized.

George Kurtyka (D) said he would like to receive a copy of the relative state statutes and also a copy of the Norfolk-Colebrook report and asked Atty. Venhorst if he would be able to supply that to the committee. Atty. Venhorst said he would. Mr. Kurtyka also stated that East Lyme and Salem merged several years ago and asked Atty. Venhorst if he would also supply that report. Atty. Venhorst said that East Lyme-Salem is not a regional district it's a cooperative arrangement. Salem doesn't have a high school so they send those students to East Lyme. They came together by contract. With a cooperative arrangement two boards came together and entered into contractual arrangement thereby eliminating the need for a referendum or any of the statutory steps that are required. Mr. Kurtyka asked about Lyme and East Lyme - is that a regional school district? Atty. Venhorst said it is and all their information is publicly available.

Mr. Adamowski said the closest regional district to us geographically is Amity. He asked if the regionalization of the secondary level, with towns keeping their own elementary schools, is that also an option. Atty. Venhorst said absolutely. He then reviewed statutory requirements.

C.G.S. §10-43 (in bold)/ Atty. Venhorst's comments *(in italics)*

1. **The findings of the committee with respect to the advisability of establishing a regional school district.** *The committee's ultimate recommendation.*
2. **The towns to be included.** *Ansonia and Derby.*
3. **The grade levels for which educational programs are to be provided.** *The committee could look at this and form a K-9 or 9-12 region. All options are on the table. That's why it's so important to keep in mind the goals of the committee.*
4. **Detailed educational and budget plans for at least a five-year period including projections of enrollments, staff needs and deployment and a description of all programs and supportive services planned for the proposed regional school district.** *What are the curricular offerings going to be? Student enrollments, personnel issues, etc...*
5. **The facilities recommended.** *Is a new building required or adding on to a facility, etc...?*
6. **Estimates of the cost of land and facilities.**
7. **A recommendation concerning the capital contribution of each participating town based on appraisals or a negotiated valuation of existing land and facilities owned and used by each town for public elementary and secondary education, which the committee recommends be acquired for use by the proposed regional school district, together with a plan for the transfer of such land and facilities.**
8. **A recommendation concerning the size of the Board of Education to serve the proposed regional school district and the representation of each town thereon.** *There are several formulations that regional districts have.*
9. **Such other matters as the committee deems pertinent.**

Tara Hyder (D) said hearing this it sounds like a lot of the work is based on the assumption of full out regionalization. She asked Atty. Venhorst if he's ever been involved where the outcome of the report suggests another option such as shared services. Atty. Venhorst said that is a great question. He said tonight we are in the statutory process of examining regionalization, proposed regionalization noting that this is the only way to form a regional district except for getting special legislation. We may find that after a couple of years of studying and analyzing all of this information that regionalization doesn't make sense but we believe there could be another way to go. Ms. Hyder said shared services could be an outcome of all this work. Atty. Venhorst said yes.

Mr. Izzo said Section 10-43, 1-9 is essentially the framework that dictates how the committee moves forward even if we come up with some other ideas and suggestions and areas that we want to look at. Atty. Venhorst said that is correct stating that item #1 – the findings of the committee with respect to the advisability of establishing a regional school district is the bottom line.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Atty. Venhorst said the committee needs to elect a temporary Chair for purposes of taking down nominations. Mr. Adamowski asked Atty. Venhorst if he could serve as temporary Chair. Atty. Venhorst said he could.

Atty. Venhorst then read into the record C.G.S. §10-41 – Officers and records of committee.

C.G.S. §10-41 – Officers and recorders of committee

The committee, at its first meeting, shall elect from among its number a chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer who shall be bonded, and such other officers as the committee determines to be necessary. Meetings of the committee shall be held at the call of the chairperson or at such times as the committee determines. A majority of the committee shall constitute a quorum. The treasurer shall receive all funds and monies of the committee, pay out the same upon the order of the committee within the limits of such receipts and keep detailed accounts thereof. The secretary of the committee shall keep minutes of the meetings and file copies thereof with the town clerk of each participating town.

The role of secretary was reviewed. It was noted that the secretary must be a member of the committee. Mr. Izzo asked if there would be a chair and a secretary from each city. There would only be one secretary. The committee took a recess at 7:40 p.m. to discuss the matter.

Mr. Gildea said he believes this can all be resolved in public portion. He feels that the suggestion of co-chairs is a wonderful idea. He then asked if the committee member elected secretary actually has to take the minutes or can the committee hire someone to perform this task. Atty. Venhorst said someone could be hired. He said the only thing required under the F.O.I. laws is the minutes are taken and recorded in a timely manner. Ms. DeGennaro said there is already someone who is going to be here to record the minutes – do we even need to have a secretary. Atty. Venhorst said he has to follow the law and it states that one needs to be elected. Mr. Gildea said we can hire someone to take the minutes and they can be paid out of the grant – this way neither town is responsible for the expense. Atty. Venhorst said you could always rotate the responsibility.

A MOTION was made by Ms. Hyder with a second by Mr. Jaumann to have a Co-Chair model as opposed to a chair model for the committee. **Motion carried.**

ELECTION OF CHAIR

A MOTION was made by Ms. Hyder with a second by Mr. Kurtyka to elect James Gildea (Derby) and John Izzo (Ansonia) as Co-Chairs of the committee. **Motion carried.**

ELECTION OF SECRETARY

A MOTION was made by Mr. Gildea with a second by Mr. Izzo to elect George Kurtyka as Secretary for the committee. **Motion carried.**

ELECTION OF TREASURER

Mr. Adamowski asked if anyone on the committee is already bonded – none. The process of being bonded was discussed. Ms. DeGennaro described the process for probate bonds. It is basically an underwriting process for insurance. Mr. Adamowski said this may take several months. Ms. DeGennaro said that's why she mentioned it early. The elected treasurer can oversee the expenses but there must be a better way of handling this. Mr. Jaumann asked about the statutory language – does it just say that we have to have one. Ms. DeGennaro said it states a treasurer who shall be bonded. Atty. Venhorst asked about the state grant. Dr. Conway said the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) is the administrator for the grant. Rep. Gentile said the NVCOG assisted her with the grant and she would be happy to put the person elected treasurer in touch with John DeCarlo at NVCOG. Ms. DeGennaro asked Atty. Venhorst if this issue has ever come up before. Atty. Venhorst said not at the committee level. Dr. Conway said the other towns may not have received a grant.

A MOTION was made by Ms. Hyder with a second by Mr. Gildea to elect Steven Adamowski as Treasurer for the committee. **Motion carried.**

ADOPTION OF ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

A MOTION was made by Ms. DeGennaro with a second by Mr. Jaumann to adopt Robert's Rules of Order. **Motion carried.**

MEETING SCHEDULE

The committee members then discussed how often should they meet. Mr. Jaumann said he would first schedule a regular meeting and then decide on sub-committees. Mr. Vaccaro suggested holding the next meeting in Ansonia since we're in Derby tonight. The committee members reviewed their calendars.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Adamowski with a second by Mr. Gildea to set the meeting schedule as the fourth Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. alternating between sites in Ansonia and Derby. The dates for the next three meetings are July 23, August 27 and September 24th.

DISCUSSION ON MOTION

Mr. Adamowski said he feels that we should rotate the meeting schedule between Ansonia and Derby and try to hold the meetings at schools. Mr. Gildea thinks that is a good idea. Mr. Kurtyka said we'll need to reach out to the Superintendents for access. Mr. Izzo said he will contact Dr. Merlone and schedule the next meeting for July 23rd at Ansonia High School. Ms. Hyder asked about agenda items. Mr. Gildea said that would be discussed at the first meeting.

MOTION CARRIED.

Ms. Hyder said regarding agenda items she feels it's important to know what our goals are for each of our communities. Mr. Jaumann said it is also important that we have copies of the reports and statutes that were discussed this evening. Mr. Izzo said he

feels it's important to reach out to each other's respective Board of Education, Unions, etc... to let them know when the meetings are scheduled to get their input.

Atty. Venhorst said the committee may want to think about holding a Public Hearing to gather comments from the citizens. Mr. Kurtyka said we need to encourage public participation as this affects all taxpayers of each town. Ms. DeGennaro suggested contacting ACES. Rep. Gentile said she can get in touch with ACES for recommendations regarding who would be able to assist with the study and suggested the committee do this sooner rather than later.

Mr. Kurtyka asked Patty Finn if she would be taking the minutes for the committee. Ms. Finn said she is just filling in tonight and Meg Martins from the City of Derby Town & City Clerk's Office would be the recording secretary.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Recording Secretary records this portion of the meeting as verbatim)

Linda Gentile, State Representative, 104th District

I'm the state representative currently for Ansonia and Derby – almost in total retirement. I would like to make a recommendation to you Dr. Adamowski since you will be doing the duties of the treasurer. The grant was written through the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments and I would be happy to share the name of the person that would be happy to walk you through all the details that you would need. Thank you.

Mr. Adamowski told Rep. Gentile that everybody owes you a debt of thanks for your involvement with procuring the grant that basically relieves both towns of their (inaudible.) Rep. Gentile said she's not so sure – maybe it would have been better if we didn't have the money but I'm glad (inaudible.)

Frederick Picroski, 216 Derby Avenue, Derby, CT

Basically what I would like to say is we have to get some goals defined. One is obviously saving money but let's get down – still get down to specifics on how we intend to save money. Two, we definitely want to provide a better education for our children and let's get some specifics on that. If we decide to merge are we going to have a more diverse curriculum? Because we merge we got a bigger school now and we can have classes like in different foreign languages or different sciences that would only draw four or five students in each school or something like that. Also one other thought I had was between these two districts sometimes the children are with their parents for a while then they move in with a grandparent or aunt or something along that nature – various family members. Even if we don't regionalize I would like to see children be able to stay in the school they started in. So if the child started in Bradley School and then moved in with an aunt on the other side of town rather than them going to Irving School I would like to see a child start the school in September where they're currently living in that district and then our communities make an effort to keep that child in that school until the end of the year in June and then if the child is still at that new residence then we re-assign them to a school. Because I grew up in Springfield, MA I started at the neighborhood school and there was a lot of disruption in the classroom as people shifted in and out and even though they move within the same city they move out of one district into another district. I then got transferred to a magnet school for fifth and sixth grade and we had much more consistency in the

classroom. And a few students moved because their mother got sick, went to jail – whatever so they moved in with their aunt or a grandparent and then the student would simply say I'm moving in with my aunt and the teacher would say you're on a new bus – that's it. We had more consistency in the classroom and I think even if we don't merge completely if we can do something where we try to make an effort to keep the students in school where they start in September – keep them through. Even if we could reach out – Derby could reach out to Shelton – to do that or some of the towns. This is something that I'm kind of throwing out here. Let's make an effort to at least keep the child in the same school where they started. It's especially important in elementary school but also the high school as well because some schools don't offer certain classes that other schools offer. So like I said I definitely like the idea of that you got – you want to get some specific goals nailed down but even if we decide not to regionalize in the long run let's at least make an effort to – for the teachers and students – to give them a consistent year with the fewest interruptions as possible. Thank you.

Mr. Izzo asked three more times if anyone wished to speak. Hearing no requests the public portion closed.

Mr. Kurtyka asked during this two to four year process what would happen if Shelton or Seymour approached us and said they would be interested. Rep. Gentile said initially there was talk of them coming in and then there was a snafu but when they wrote the grant it states up to four communities. Atty. Venhorst said as a legal process we've started with Ansonia and Derby. He said if another town wanted to come in he believes the towns would have to vote again to initiate a new temporary regional school study committee. Mr. Kurtyka said he realizes the committee is asking for a lot of things to be checked into but he asked Atty. Venhorst if he would be able to check into this. Atty. Venhorst said he doesn't know how much more checking he can do. He is only one person but will send the Norfolk-Colebrook Report and the state statutes to the co-chairs.

ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION was made by Mr. Izzo with a second by Ms. DeGennaro to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. **Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,



Patty Finh

Temporary Recording Secretary

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE TEMPORARY REGIONAL SCHOOL STUDY COMMITTEE AT THEIR NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING.