

## **Board of Apportionment & Taxation City of Ansonia**

The Board of Apportionment & Taxation of the City of Ansonia held their regular meeting on Monday, May 11, 2009 in the Aldermanic Chambers of Ansonia City Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to hold a public session for comment on the tentative budget and to establish a tentative budget and tentative mil rate for the fiscal year July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010.

### **Members Present**

Commune  
Kennedy  
Kohut  
Norman  
Smerznak  
Strumello  
Veillette  
Williams  
Sturges

### **Members Absent**

Boran  
Confinante  
Galston

Chairman Sturges called the meeting to order. The Board rose for the Pledge of Allegiance. The record shows 9 members present.

Mr. Commune made a motion to accept the call of the meeting. Mr. Norman seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

### **Public Session**

At this time Mr. Sturges opened the meeting to anyone who wished to comment on the tentative budget.

### **Ms. Carol Merlone, Superintendent of Schools**

Hello, my name is Carol Merlone, the Superintendent of Schools and a taxpayer in the City of Ansonia. I live at 8 Shortell Drive. I'm here on behalf of Ansonia Public Schools and our students. I'm here to share with you factual information and clarify rumors you may have heard. Two years ago when I became Superintendent of Schools, I promised to work collaboratively with city officials in order to improve communication and provide clarity about Board finances. I believe we've come a long way. I have been forthright and established structures to provide accountability so we can present an effective, transparent budget. Two months ago, I returned \$140,000 to the city from last year's health premiums.

In effort to reduce costs for the 2009-2010 budgetary year we created an early retirement plan, which allowed 19 teachers and 2 secretaries to retire, resulting in a savings of more than \$200,000. Our Business Administrator renegotiated the health premiums for the coming year, which will keep us at a 0% increase. We have been frugal with our budget, implementing our

freeze on discretionary spending at the end of October. We feel we have fostered transparency between the Board of Education and the City.

This year, you have all heard that the State Department of Education is working directly with our school district. We are one of 15 urban school districts that need to improve the quality of our educational program and help students achieve at higher levels. This intervention creates more demands on our system and comes at a time when our country is in an economic crisis. Improving the quality of education costs money; for example, the state is requiring us to develop comprehensive curriculum over the next three years and train all of our staff in Research Based Strategies to increase achievement and a 0% budget will not enable us to meet this demand.

The State Department of Education will remain involved in our school district in the coming years, and we will be under the microscope as we work to increase student performance. A 0% budget will not allow us to achieve the results that the state expects and that our students deserve. I do know that the City is disappointed with the lack of concessions from several of our unions. However, some of the positives are

- administrators will give back \$10,000,
- that Central office administration will give back \$25,000; and
- the tutors' union is willing to extend their contract or discuss negotiations.

Although the teachers did not give concessions for 2009-2010, I met with the AFT presidents and their field representative and conversations focused around a deferral for the 2010-2011 year.

What I can tell you about teachers is that:

- the Ansonia district has the lowest number of teachers per 1,000 students in the State.
- the State Average of general education teachers per 1,000 students is 64.8% and Ansonia is the lowest at 54.9%.
- Ansonia is 129 out of 158 school districts with the most number of students in fifth grade and next year, we will have 27 students per class which brings us right to the bottom of the list, #158.
- Ansonia teacher salaries are on the lower end paid throughout the state and because of this, we have a teacher turnover rate that is astronomical, which is not good for students.

What I can tell you is that Ansonia teachers are dedicated and committed. They are working harder than ever. Our teachers will tell you that they have given up 2 days a month after school to work on data teams required by the State for no additional pay. Our teachers will tell you that the pressure and the demands from the State Department of Education are great and Ansonia school children have the greatest needs: poverty, student mobility, limited English language proficiency, teacher turnover, and lack of resources are significant factors affecting student achievement – and now we are going to have to cut back from full day kindergarten to five full day and five half-day kindergartens, which is disastrous for a distressed community.

I don't know how to do this. My hands are tied. I am calling upon each of you for your help. I can't maintain what we have this year, let alone meet the increase in State and Federal requirements for next year with a 0% budget.

**Mr. John Lawlor, Board of Education Chairman**

8 Michael Street

Mr. Lawlor wished to thank the Board for all their long hours and hard work put into arriving that this budget. Mr. Lawlor is here in the capacity of Board of Education Chairman, Parent and Taxpayer and would like the Board to reconsider the 0% increase to the BOE Budget. If the 2009-2010 budget remains as is it will result in both positions and programs being eliminated, the children of Ansonia deserve better than this. The BOE has worked hard to consider their effect on the City of Ansonia and its taxpayers. Early teacher retirement has brought savings to the City. The BOE has saved or returned \$850,000. Please consider a 2% increase to the budget which equates to a \$512,000 increase less than a ½ mil increase or \$74.45 per year.

No one else wished to address the Board the public session was closed at 7:10 p.m.

**Tentative Budget**

**101 School Building Commission \$0**

Mr. Norman made a motion to approve the tentative budget for School Building Commission for fiscal year 2009-2010 in the amount of \$0. Mr. Commune seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**200 BOAT \$591,211**

Mr. Norman made a motion to approve the tentative budget for BOAT for fiscal year 2009-2010 in the amount of \$591,211. Mr. Kennedy seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**201 City Government \$1,511,639**

Mr. Commune made a motion to approve the tentative budget for City Government for fiscal year 2009-2010 in the amount of \$1,511,639. Mr. Smerznak seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**202 Elections \$35,977**

Mr. Kennedy made a motion to approve the tentative budget for Elections for fiscal year 2009-2010 in the amount of \$35,977. Mr. Strumello seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**210 Flood Control \$39,419**

Mr. Commune made a motion to approve the tentative budget for Flood Control for fiscal year 2009-2010 in the amount of \$39,419. Mr. Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**211 City Engineer \$35,583**

Mr. Veillette made a motion to approve the tentative budget for City Engineer for fiscal year 2009-2010 in the amount of \$35,583. Mr. Commune seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**212 Building Inspector \$106,418**

Mr. Norman made a motion to approve the tentative budget for the Building Inspector for fiscal year 2009-2010 in the amount of \$106,418. Mr. Kennedy seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**214 Nature Center \$169,807**

Mr. Strumello made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for the Nature Center in the amount of \$169,807. Mr. Norman seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**215 Insurance and Debt Service \$9,323,788**

Mr. Commune made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for Insurance and Debt Service in the amount of \$9,323,788. Mr. Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**216 Mayor's Office \$201,257**

Mr. Smerznak made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for the Mayor's Office in the amount of \$201,257. Mr. Commune seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**301 Police Department \$4,557,594**

Mr. Kennedy made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for the Police Department in the amount of \$4,557,594. Mr. Veillette seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**302 Senior Center \$141,880**

Mr. Smerznak made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for the Senior Center in the amount of \$141,880. Mr. Norman seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**400 Fire Marshall \$70,364**

Mr. Williams a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for the Fire Marshall in the amount of \$70,364. Mr. Commune seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (8 yes, 1 no Norman)

**401 Fire Department \$230,850**

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for the Fire Department in the amount of \$230,850. Mr. Commune seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**402 Finance Department \$470,790**

Mr. Commune made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for the Finance Department in the amount of \$470,790. Mr. Smerznak seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**405 Economic Development \$181,197**

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for the Economic Development in the amount of \$181,197. Mr. Kennedy seconded the motion. The motion was denied. (5 yes, 4 no Norman, Smerznak, Veillette, Williams)

**420 Tax Department \$162,105**

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for the Tax Department in the amount of \$162,105. Mr. Norman seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**450 Assessors Office \$130,280**

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for the Assessor Office in the amount of \$130,280. Mr. Smerznak seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**502 Streets & Bridges \$2,559,611**

Mr. Norman made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for Streets & Bridges in the amount of \$2,559,611. Mr. Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**601 Library \$565,346**

Mr. Smerznak made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for the Library in the amount of \$565,346. Mr. Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (8 yes, 1 no Williams)

**602 Building & Refuse \$3,080,419**

Mr. Commune made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for Building & Refuse in the amount of \$3,080,419. Mr. Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**701 Recreation \$181,495**

Mr. Commune made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for Recreation in the amount of \$181,495. Mr. Veillette seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**702 Board of Education \$25,577,214**

Mr. Commune made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for the Board of Education in the amount of \$25,577,214. Mr. Norman seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**801 ARMS \$304,622**

Mr. Kennedy made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for ARMS in the amount of \$304,622. Mr. Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**802 Town & City Clerk \$178,762**

Mr. Smerznak made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for Town & City Clerk in the amount of \$178,762. Mr. Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**850 Municipal Grants \$471,845**

Mr. Commune made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for Municipal Grants in the amount of \$471,845. Mr. Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**851 Educational Grants \$3,959,771**

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for Educational Grants in the amount of \$3,959,771. Mr. Commune seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**875 Capital Improvements \$99,000**

Mr. Strumello made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for Capital Improvements in the amount of \$99,000. Mr. Norman seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**901 Municipal Planning \$21,500**

Mr. Norman made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for Municipal Planning in the amount of \$21,500. Mr. Commune seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**Recess**

Mr. Norman made a motion to have a 10-minute recess. Mr. Commune seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

The meeting was called back to order at 7:40 p.m.

**405 Economic Development \$181,197**

Mr. Norman made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for the Economic Development in the amount of \$181,197. Mr. Kohut seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (8 yes, 1 no Williams)

**Total Tentative Budget Expenses Fiscal Year 2009-2010 \$54,955,744**

Mr. Norman made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for

expenses in the amount of \$54,955,744. Mr. Commune seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**Use of Fund Balance as Income \$100,000**

Mr. Norman made a motion to approve the use of \$100,000 of surplus from the fund balance as income. Mr. Kennedy seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**Total Tentative Budget Income Fiscal Year 2009-2010 \$54,955,744**

Mr. Norman made a motion to approve the tentative budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 for income in the amount of \$55,685,357. Mr. Commune seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

**Tentative Mil Rate Fiscal Year 2009-2010 25.25**

Mr. Norman made a motion to approve a tentative mil rate for fiscal year 2009-2010 at 25.25 mills. Mr. Commune seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

Mr. Sturges advised the audience that comments heard this evening regarding the tentative budget will be considered over the coming week. Also it should be noted that the budget from the State has not been set to date.

With no other business to come before the Board Mr. Norman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kohut seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (9 yes)

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Duclos  
Sec. Board of Apportionment & Taxation