

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

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The Board of Apportionment & Taxation of the City of Ansonia held a budget workshop on Monday, February 23, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in Ansonia City Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Public Works and Board of Education Budgets.

**Members Present**

Ms. Blackwell (Arrived 6:10 p.m.)  
Mr. Cassetti (Arrived 6:15 p.m.)  
Mr. Delibero  
Mr. Izzo  
Mr. Smerznak  
Mr. Veillette  
Mr. King

The meeting was called to order by Chairman King. The Board rose for the Pledge of Allegiance. The record shows 7 members present, there is a quorum.

**Public Works 555**

Superintendent Doug Novak was present to discuss the Public Works Budget.

The Departments original request was for \$4,893,646 however the Mayor's budget cut the department down to \$4,058,358 an increase over last fiscal year of \$199,940.

Mr. Novak advised the Board that winter storms like the ones this February break budgets, storms are coming on the weekend requiring time and a half and double time for overtime.

Areas of concern are:

- The fleet is aging so more funding is needed to keep the vehicles on the road. Equipment Repair was requested for \$519,330 and cut back to 85,000
- Park & Street Maintenance requested \$100,000 up 77,500 from last fiscal year this line item included all field maintenance.
- Park & Street Repairs was funded for only \$2,000 this account is used for fencing and wall repairs. Transferring between the Maintenance and Repair account are likely.

- Sand & Salt line item allocated \$67,000 for the current fiscal year will not be nearly enough; the request for 2014-2015 is \$80,000.
- Overtime has been over spent by approximately \$60,000 to date the request for 2014-2015 is at \$90,000. The storm are not the only factor of overtime the Harvest Festival and this year's 125<sup>th</sup> Celebration also play a role in overtime expenses.
- Building repairs covers all Town Buildings and they all need work. The Armory floor needs to be replaced, the new roof is leaking and being addressed with the contractor.
- Contractual Services is used to cover the hiring of any contractor for the need of additional snow removal, rental of equipment anything the City may need in an emergency.

The new gas pump system is going well it is not 100% complete, data is still being inputted but the hope is to have it completed by April. The system can be set up by gallons for a vehicle of course everything can be overrode by the Superintendent if needed. The analysis the system will provide will be valuable.

The facility is continually being cleaned up, scrap is being sold, machines and old vehicles are also being considered for sale.

The Capital Improvement Plan is being worked on and will be going to the voters in November.

### **Board of Education 701**

Superintendent Carol Merlone Ed.D, Principals from the Schools, the Facility Manager as well as the Business Manager was available for the Board.

Ms. Merlone opened with words of the growing need of the children of Ansonia. The buildings need repairs. The BOE Budget submitted was \$30,799,138 the Mayor submitted a Budget of \$30,053,095. The Boards and Mayor understand the needs of the Board of Education. Many communities including Ansonia have children in poverty. Coming to school hungry, not clothed appropriately or having family situations they bring into the classroom. Schools need social workers and support staff to address issues so children can concentrate on learning. For eight years Ms. Merlone has been cutting services, some of the Board members may ask why there are two administrators in a building, times have changed. 72% of students are on a free or reduced lunch program, the role of an administrator has changed

significantly. Ansonia has cut human capital and administrators are trying to support teachers and motivate. Most administrators work a ten hour day. It is difficult to get the best Administrators, Ansonia is losing good talent for other district for wages that far out way what we are paying.

Principals Goldson and Dobbins both addressed the Board regarding the multimillion dollar buildings the City has with the schools. Over the last five years zero funding has gone into the budget for the buildings, cuts had to be made. Costs go up so a zero increase in the budget results in cuts to the Board of Education. Ansonia's PPE (Per Pupil Expenditure) is among the lowest out of the 169 districts in Connecticut, the only reason why we went up in the ratings is because the student numbers decrease therefore the PPE appeared to increase.

Basketball for the Boys and Girls as well as baseball and softball has recently been added back as programs for our children. Ansonia teachers volunteer their time with the kids for groups and clubs where in other district they are paid.

In these tough economic times the BOE has been creative with needs, reducing a secretary from full to half time for example. The City will have the NEASC visit next year for the accreditation of the schools the cost to prepare for that is \$22,000 that is in the current budget.

Ansonia has seen improved rate of graduation and a larger number of students going on to post secondary education.

The High School has received a grant to be used to pay for the SAT Test at the school.

Mr. Gaskin Business Manager reviewed the Operating Budget with the Board the overall percentage increase request is 6.58%, the average increase over the last six years has been 2.06%.

Salaries and benefits represent 3.25% of the increase (included the cost of the Crossing Guards new to the budget this year).

The insurance numbers are not firm as of the budget request up will be updated when available

Tuition, Transportation and Special Education Aids (required by law) is 3.19%

The purchase services for special education are lagging a year behind, the projected out of district cost for special education is at \$4,000,000.

The district is trying to work with surrounding school districts for busing. The larger the group is the more competitive bids can be. Currently the cost is \$300/day/bus.

The technology equipment in the buildings are all in need of upgrading all are beyond their useful life.

The \$20,000 put in the budget for Capital Improvements, that not a plan that is a down payment for a project.

The City will not receive the Summer School Grant Funding \$39,000, that need to be funded.

Mr. Gaskins did point out the BOE is always looking for ways to save and cut spending:

- Eliminated a bus route
- Changed lighting in the buildings, added solar panels
- Out sourced Special Education
- Converted from Heating Oil to Gas
- Offered Retirement Incentives
- Reduction in Medical Benefits
- At least one year of zero increase to salaries
- Negotiating transportation

The BOE realizes the Mayor's Budget approves a 4% increase but the 6.5% submitted by the BOE will keep staff and services if additional funding is not approved staff, operations and services will need to be cut.

Ms. Merlone advised the Board that she, members of her staff and City Official have gone up to Hartford, they have spoken to legislators pleaded their case of an impoverish district looking for assistance. They are trying to purchase portable classrooms to place behind Mead School to bring students back and educate them at home.

Alderman Vaccaro advised the Board that in 2013 Ansonia had 367 special education students today we have 475 that is a 30% increase. If these

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numbers keep climbing, funding will be taken from the regular education budget. To date the special education represents 32% of the total budget.

Alderman Stowe said the State needs to come up with more funds. Ansonia needs to create a coalition with Teachers, Parents, and Town Officials go up to Hartford and have our voices heard.

Mr. Izzo wished to congratulate the district for their increased test scores, he admitted that at one time he felt the district was top heavy, however now he realizes Ansonia is a depressed City and this is a challenge, these administrators are in need.

Mr. King voiced his interest in supporting the Board of Education. Ms. Merlone thanked the Board for their support.

With no other business to come before the Board Ms. Blackwell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Veillette seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (7 yes)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Duclos  
Secretary Board of Apportionment & Taxation