Salem School Committee

Special Meeting Minutes

Monday, July 27, 2015

A regular meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Monday, July 27, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. in the School Committee Chambers at Collins Middle School, 29 Highland Avenue, Salem, MA.

**Members Present**: Mayor Kimberley Driscoll, Ms. Deborah Amaral, Mr. James Fleming, Mr. Patrick Schultz, Mr. Nate Bryant and Dr. Brendan Walsh

**Members Absent:** Ms. Rachel Hunt

**Others Present**: Ms. Margarita Ruiz, Superintendent of Schools, Assistant Superintendent Kate Carbone, Ms. Margaret Marotta, Assistant Superintendent, Business Manager Philip Littlehale and Eileen Sacco, Secretary

**Call to Order**

Mr. Fleming called the Special Meeting of the Salem School Committee to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Approval of the Agenda**

Dr. Walsh moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Schultz seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Questions and Comments from the Audience**

There were no questions or comments from the audience.

**Superintendent’s Report**

Ms. Ruiz gave a brief report on summer programs currently underway in the Salem Public Schools.

**Transportation Plan Update**

Ms. Ruiz reported that the staff has been working on the implementation plan for the revised transportation policy that adopted the state requirements for eligibility for bus transportation. She asked Mr. Littlehale to make a presentation to the School Committee.

Mr. Littlehale reported that that they looked at the initial option that was to focus on reducing the number of students entitled to busing by following the 2 mile state policy. He explains that they looked at a new option of increasing the capacity and they worked with central office staff to identify ways to increase our capacity to transport students for the 2015-2016 school year.

Mr. Littlehale explained that they identified ways to increase the capacity with the addition of two district owned and operated buses. He notes that this approach increases our capacity to transport our students and opens the path to owning and operating a fleet of buses owned by the Salem Public Schools and significantly reduces the impact on our students.

Mr. Littlehale explained the available resources noting that the budgeted amount for transportation was $496,000 and the contracted buses are $432,000. He notes that there is $64,000 available. He explained that the cost to add a bus under the contract is $72,000 or we could lease a bus for $18,000 plus the cost of a driver at $22,000 for a cost of $40,000.

Mr. Littlehale explained that the each year we replace two new buses through the city capital improvement plan and notes that rather than spend the money in the spring they are accelerating the process. He explains that they have identified sources of available buses and it will have to go out to bid. He explains the estimated costs as follows:

* Capital & Operating
* Capital - $140,000 estimated

Purchase Buses

New Buses $75-000 - $95,000

Used Buses $25,000 - $50,000

Have identified Sources of Available Buses

* Operating

2 Drivers - $45,000

Mr. Littlehale reviewed revisions recommended to the transportation policy for implementation of the plan.

**Policy Recommendations**

Mileage - Limits be set to this past year’s limits

Grades K to 2 1 Mile

Grades 3 to 5 1.5 Miles

Grade 6 2 Miles

Grades 7 to 12 On a space available basis with fee as appropriate

Mr. Littlehale explains that the language in the policy regarding students who are not eligible to transportation was eliminated in the policy and recommended that it be put back into the policy that any student who lives closer to than one mile to the school that he or she attends shall not be eligible to purchase transportation.

Mr. Littlehale reported that GIS mapping is underway and noted that they have purchased routing and planning software and the installation is underway. He states that the site is being built and data files are being generated, and training is targeted for mid-August.

Mr. Littlehale stated that they are reexamining how they are doing things and are looking at central pickups and are reviewing last year’s routes for opportunities. He also noted that they have a new online application and access through My School Bucks is up and running.

Mr. Littlehale reported on the next steps and explains that letters have been mailed to all current riders who live more than two miles informing them that no application is need and letters were mailed to all students the week of July 6th. He recommended that the School Committee revisit the transportation policy at their next meeting.

Mr. Bryant noted that Mr. Littlehale mentioned a GPS program and asked if it will be in all the buses. Mr. Littlehale explained that it is routing software and they will be using it to redesign the bus routes.

Dr. Walsh stated that his initial impression is that a great deal of work went into this transportation plan and the staff did a great job putting it together. He notes that the Chair of the Policy Subcommittee is not present this evening and offered that he thinks that the policy language can be handled as an amendment to the policy.

Mr. Fleming stated that Mr. Littlehale and Mr. LeClerc have done a very good job with this plan to come up with a solution. He also noted that out sourcing work looks good for the first couple of years but as the years go on we are at their mercy.

Mayor Driscoll asked Mr. Littlehale what the split is on the district buses versus the contracted buses. Mr. Littlehale explained that it is 60/40. He also explains that the contract for the buses allows us to go up or down 1 or 2 buses so we will be locked in for at least 3 buses for the next two years.

Mayor Driscoll asked if there is an allowance for a fuel surcharge. Mr. Littlehale reported that there is an allowance for the fuel charge.

Mayor Driscoll requested that they keep Steve Tassinari at the city garage in the loop on this. Mr. Littlehale reported that Alan LeClerc is meeting with Mr. Tassinari tomorrow to look at the use buses they are considering.

Mayor Driscoll asked if the buses will be equipped with a GPS. Mr. Littlehale explained that he is looking into that and notes that he wants to see what North Reading Transportation uses so that we can link them. He notes that they may not be installed before school starts but they would be done shortly thereafter.

Dr. Walsh suggested that the School Committee amend the transportation policy to set the mileage limitations to what they were last year and to add the language back regarding ineligible students who live closer than one mile back into the policy.

Ms. Amaral suggested that the School Committee leave the policy as it is and it could be reviewed annually. She recommended that the School Committee put the language back in the policy regarding ineligible riders.

Mayor Driscoll suggested that members review the language in the policy and the School Committee can amend the policy if needed at the next meeting on August 10, 2015.

Dr. Walsh moved that the School Committee endorse the proposed transportation plan recommended by Superintendent Ruiz and Mr. Littlehale for the 2015-16 school year. Mr. Fleming seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Questions and Comments from the Audience Regarding the July 27, 2015 Agenda**

There were no questions or comments from the audience this evening.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the School Committee this evening, Mr. Fleming moved adjourn the meeting. Dr. Walsh seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Eileen M. Sacco, Secretary

Salem School Committee

**Meeting Materials and Reports**

Transportation Plan PowerPoint Presentation