

Approved: November 18, 2009

HOLLIS-BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD

NOVEMBER 6, 2009

Special Meeting
November 6, 2009
Hollis Town Hall Community Room

Janice Tremblay, Chairperson
Dan Peterson
Steve Simons
Fred Hubert
Tom Solon

Susan Hodgdon, Superintendent of Schools

Chair Tremblay called the meeting to order at 8:09 AM.

Public Input included the following:

Michelle Pratt, Brookline, asked about the Board's process to count riders and how the Board determined that buses were or were not filled to capacity. She asked whether the Board considers high school and middle school students as adults.

Lynn Marsand, Brookline, indicated that her daughter had taken an alternate bus home one afternoon and that bus wasn't as crowded as her own bus. She voiced concern about the need for parents to transport students with large items to the school. Work schedules often prohibit this. The musical instruments need to come home at night in order to practice. There is no after-school care available that would allow students to remain at school until parents can pick them up. Also concerned about safety issues on the bus.

Lynn Goldberg, Hollis, asked how ridership is calculated. She indicated her child's route is under filled.

Kelly St Hilaire, Hollis, indicated that the bus driver stated instruments could become projectiles if the bus needed to stop suddenly. She questioned whether space could be allocated in the front of the bus for musical instruments or other large carry-ons.

Tom Solon commented that the board had only voted to eliminate two routes. No policy was discussed or voted upon regarding large items.

Supt Hodgdon summarized issues facing the Board in making decisions. The goal was to eliminate two buses as these are currently not being calculated in the annual budget. The Board must, however, consider the length and ridership levels on all routes. The district has a number of students at the high school who drive their own cars, but on any given day they could ride the bus. The number of riders, however, is a moving target. Large items, including instruments, gym bags, projects works, or bake sale contributions, are carried onto the bus in addition to backpacks. The

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longest route duration is limited by Board policy to forty-five minutes. Extra time needed to store large items could upset this schedule. This would interfere with keeping the elementary school routes on time.

In response to comments that the meeting would have been better scheduled in the evening to allow more working parents to attend, Supt Hodgdon indicated that the decision was made in order to allow the Board to address the issue and act quickly.

Supt Hodgdon consulted with Sarah Browning, legal counsel for DoE. The District is responsible for transporting students in grades one through eight and any equipment that is necessary for participation in classes or after-school activities. The District chooses to provide transportation to all who need it.

Nancy Orde of Hollis Transportation indicated that buses accommodate 71 students or 47 adults.

Tom Solon asked whether we could lift the restrictions and/or lengthen the route(s). He also questioned whether ridership in the afternoon was less than in the morning.

The Board is currently running the reduced number of routes and doing counts on all routes this week, and two other weeks later on in the semester.

Nancy Rogers, Hollis, whose children ride on Route 2, indicated that she is a member of a carpool that includes 3-4 students in the morning, but who take the bus in the afternoon.

Tom Solon questioned the budgeted cost for a bus and was told that it is approximately \$27,000 per year.

Fred Hubert suggested that the Board revert to the original schedule and reinstate the two buses. He was also in favor of lengthening the times for the routes if necessary.

Tom Solon supported allowing carry-ons of all sizes.

Chair Tremblay suggested that we reconfigure the route stops in order to get riders down to the 47 counts to reflect adult riders.

Dan Peterson supported removing the restriction of taking different buses in the afternoon.

Dan Peterson made a motion to remove the recently implemented restrictions on carry-ons and bus switching and to continue with revised routes as currently defined and continue to gather data. Fred Hubert seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0.

The SAU Office will be responsible for notifying parents of the changes via AlertNow. Middle School students will continue to require written parental permission in order to take a different bus in the afternoon. The High School will need to determine a method to control changes in bus routes for the afternoon. Currently no parental note is required. There is concern that buses leaving the Middle School may already be full and unable to accommodate those students who regularly ride a bus or those wishing to take a different bus home.

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The Board briefly discussed the possibility of a computer science or math class project to calculate ridership and route configuration.

Fred Hubert moved to adjourn. Steve Simons seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM.

Submitted by Janice Tremblay, Chairperson

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