

# **Spotlight on the Board**

## **Notes from the District 15 School Board Meeting**

### **February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

This was a Committee of the Whole meeting – although voting did take place. Board President Nancy Lee Carlson was absent.

**Board Vice President Linda Silverman** opened the meeting and said that the Citizens Address the Board portion of the meeting would be split in two sections. She stated that anyone who wished to address the Board regarding transportation issues would be able to speak after the Board discussed that issue.

#### **Citizens Address the Board – Part One**

**Lou Sands** – former D15 Board of Education President  
Wanted to address two rumors circulating concerning him. First – at the last BOE meeting (Citizens Address the Board), Sands said that he wanted to address an item on the personnel report. He had received a call from the Board secretary earlier about her retirement announcement being on that report. Says that there is a rumor that he received a copy of the personnel report and he says he did not. Second rumor is that Sands said that Board member Millar may have a criminal background. Millar asked him about that at the last BOE meeting during a break. Sands said he did not say that and wanted to know who Millar heard that from or whether it was made up.

**Board member, Tim Millar** responded – Said he did hear that rumor; local people brought it up to him. Wanted to find out from Sands himself if he said it. Sands said no, Millar takes his word for that.

#### **Discussion Items**

Before presenting the 2007-2008 tentative budgets, **Dr. McKanna, D15 Superintendent** asked **Mary Zarr, Director of Curriculum** to make an announcement.

**Zarr** announced that the District 15 Spelling Bee Champion won the Northwest Suburban Cook County Spelling Bee and would now represent D15 in the Chicagoland Spelling Bee on March 7<sup>th</sup>. The student is from Sundling Jr. High School.

#### **2007-08 Tentative Budget for Operations and Maintenance**

PowerPoint presentation by **Kevin Nohelty, Asst. Superintendent for Business** and **Craig Phillips, Manager of Environmental Services**. (Handout available at: [www.fcwpta.org/pdf/O&M2007-8TentativeBudget.pdf](http://www.fcwpta.org/pdf/O&M2007-8TentativeBudget.pdf) )

#### **2007-08 Tentative Budget for the Transportation Fund**

PowerPoint presentation by Kevin Nohelty. (Handout available at: [www.fcwpta.org/pdf/TransportationFund2007-08TentativeBudget.pdf](http://www.fcwpta.org/pdf/TransportationFund2007-08TentativeBudget.pdf) )

**Nohelty** noted that \$5million of the transportation revenue reflects reimbursement from the state. The revenue and expenditure comparison charts for this year and next year show a balanced budget. Questions/comments from the Board included increase shown for interest on investments; percent reimbursed from the state of Illinois and if increased cost of fuel was included.

## **Action Item – Board Member E-mail Addresses on District Web site**

**Silverman** noted that this item has been pulled from the agenda and will be addressed at the next Board of Education meeting.

## **Action Item – Transportation Efficiency Study/Proposed Bell Schedule**

**McKanna** made a few comments as to how this issue has unfolded over the last year. Board authorized the transportation study in October, 2006. In January 2007, the District began sharing the proposal for a two-tier system. A one-tier system (same start time for every school) would substantially increase costs. If bus drivers were only driving in a one-tier system then their employment hours per day would decrease. This system would require five hours of employment per day to qualify for healthcare – which is one of the major reasons people drive for the District.

This efficiency study is looking at a greater capacity on the buses and a reduction in some driver time. A committee has been formed to discuss driver compensation because of the reduced hours. McKanna has heard from the bus drivers that this is one of their concerns.

**McKanna** summarized the findings/comments of the parent survey that was conducted and then posted on the District's Web site last week. He further stated that the proposal with start times was posted on the Web site this past Monday.

A 15-page advisory report from VersaTrans (50 copies were made available) provided the District with some options showing that a two-tier system could be done in an efficient manner. Of the two proposals outlined, the District is recommending Plan B to the Board. McKanna told the Board that the Board could come back with parameters and the proposal could be adjusted if there were no concerns with funding. Indicated that approximately 67% (2/3rds) of the transportation funding comes from the state.

**Don Skinner, Interim Co-Director of Transportation** repeated some of the parameters they used in developing the recommendation. These included: Wanted to approach this in a logical basis, go from 4 tiers to two-tiers, how schools were paired, moving late start schools to 2<sup>nd</sup> tier, split the 8:30 a.m. schools between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> tiers, looked at geographical proximity of schools and the number of bus riders at each school.

**Skinner** then explained how Paddock was paired with Marion Jordan and why Paddock was placed in the first tier. He stated that the transportation department knew that MJ served an area with a wider spacing of homes, less city lighting and no curb lighting. Thought the rational decision was to put MJ in the 2<sup>nd</sup> tier when it is later in the day and there would be more sunlight. Repeated that the entire study was approached in a logical manner to provide the most efficiency while caring for the children. The 50 minute spacing between the tiers now will give the transportation department ample time to get the children to school safely and on time to preserve the instructional day.

**Linda Fleming, Routing Coordinator** shared information on the data preparation and how it was shared with VersaTrans (the consultant) in New York. From the current bus route data sent, VersaTrans rolled the 8<sup>th</sup> graders out of the routes and then doubled the amount of current Kindergartners and made them 1<sup>st</sup> graders for these projections. VersaTrans then created the routes, gave estimated times and number of riders per bus. This is all a projection – gives the transportation department a starting point. After the real data is in, the routes can be tweaked if some are too heavily loaded or too long. The times can be adjusted so the children are not on the bus for a long time.

**Bob Anderson, Interim Co-Director of Transportation** stated that the study gives them the confidence that a two-tier system can work – it would not be a waste of time for them to develop the routes. Said that if there is approval tonight on the bell schedule, the transportation department will have a 3 month running start on developing the routes.

**McKanna** recommends the Plan B starting times shown in the study and there would be some shuttling from the junior highs to the parochial schools. Of the 800 parochial/private school students that are bused, 600 are at St. Theresa. Noted that for the past 5 years, Immanuel Lutheran students have been bused from a junior high with no issues/concerns. Asked for approval on either the 7:55/8:45 a.m. start times or 8/8:50 a.m. start times. Stated that the District is comfortable with either of those time frames. Asked for decision tonight.

### **Board member discussion regarding the transportation study/bell schedule**

**Board Member, Kelly Keenan** commented on some of the specific routes from the study. Noted that some schools from the late start were starting 20 minutes earlier than now, however the bus routes were longer. The net savings of time was only 10 to 15 minutes – so really only getting home about 10 minutes earlier than current times. Also doesn't think it is a good idea to have the parochial school children change buses at the junior high. Stated that the Board didn't start this to save money, the District is reimbursed at a very high level for transportation. Believes that to give less service and not save much money is not worth it. Stated that some decreases in bus time are only 1 minute or so. Added times are much greater than that on some routes. Thinks that the parameter of no greater than 45 minutes is too long for children to be on the bus.

**Nohelty** explained that some buses now only have 16 kids on a 65 passenger bus. This study utilizes buses to their capacity and did note that the children are riding longer. West side of the district – houses are more spread out. East side has higher density. Said this is a much more efficient plan utilizing the District's resources better. Said not to get caught up in the details. For example, MJ shows an average ride time of 30 minutes however some children will be on the bus for 20 minutes and some for 40 minutes. Parameters were that no children would ride the bus longer than 45 minutes.

**Anderson** stated this study proves that the District can do a two-tier schedule – doesn't view this as a final plan for the District. Transportation department will respond to the public's concerns and is months away from developing a routing schedule for the District. Excited that the Board would adopt a bell schedule and then the transportation dept. can get started.

**McKanna** said that the Board can tell the District what the parameters need to be. Then the District will come back and give costs. Went into this to be fiscally responsible.

**Board Member, Wendy Rowden** commented that the reason was not simply to save money, but to give some consistency to our start/stop times. The Board can set the parameters; those parameters may come at a cost. Said the bottom line is that the parameter discussion is separate from setting school start/stop times. Stated that the District needs to work with the local high schools/police department to ensure safety of the students. Goal was to come up with a more reasonable, responsible solution to an issue that has caused anxiety every year for the past three years.

**Board Member, Tim Millar** commented on the safety issue with Palatine HS. Millar has more of a preference for Plan A (7:55 a.m./8:45 a.m.) vs. Plan B. Plan A might give less time on the bus – but admitted that the District doesn't have those times now. Cost may not be much of a difference between the two plans because of state reimbursements, especially since special ed

gets reimbursed at a higher percentage. Extra curricular buses are not reimbursed at all. Thinks that Plan A may provide better service however route times were not provided for Plan A in this study.

**Nohelty** clarified that special education transportation is reimbursed at 100%; regular education at 80%. Confirmed that 2/3rds of our transportation funding comes from the state.

**Board Member, Scott Boucher** agrees with Rowden. Board wanted to invoke fairness and get a bell schedule that the District would live with and to go forward. What drove this study was to get the District to a point of getting something more solid to base the bell schedule on. Said that the Board could set the two-tier system for this year, have enough time to plan. Depending on how the routes go, District can build efficiencies year after year and may be able to squeeze some more efficiency out. Hopefully get to the point where the District has permanent start times.

## **Citizens Address the Board – Part Two**

**Chris Deet** – President of the St. Theresa School Board

St. Theresa has long sought change in busing policies. St. Theresa's administration has also expressed a desire for a longer school day. Hoped that the District would have had detailed plans before making a decision. Concerned how about much input was received from private/parochial schools; shocked that the Board could vote on a plan with so few details; concerned that some St. Theresa students may have a 45 minute bus ride including a shuttle transfer; concerned about safety issues particularly of 1<sup>st</sup> graders and kindergarteners transferring buses; also concerned about potential bullying issues on the buses. Stated that they will continue to work with the District on the busing issue.

**Laurie Kish** – St. Theresa parent

Disappointed that St. Theresa parents did not take part in the parent survey. Asked how the Board could vote on this issue without input from everyone? Concerned that the shuttling issue was not addressed in the proposal. Asked why it is not possible for the parochial schools to keep their bus schedules the same as they currently are?; will the parochial students physically change to different buses at the junior highs?; is that safe for younger students? Stated that parent concerns on the survey were mainly issues of getting children up early and waiting for buses in the cold/dark. Said that parochial schools have dealt with that issue all along; they chose to make these sacrifices because they believe in the unique educational experience that their schools offer.

**McKanna** responded – The District did not survey private/parochial school parents because at that time, the District did not have a proposed time to share with the parents. When the District surveyed the public school parents, there was a Plan A and B. Could not physically put private/parochial schools on either tier 1 or 2. There was no way the District could bring in those students at 7:45 a.m. and have them go home at the first tier time. Had to look at Tier 1 going to school and Tier 2 end time going home. District wanted to meet with the leaders of the private/parochial schools for their input. Board has talked about options A and B with a difference of approximately \$70K or \$80K between them.

**Diana Olsen** – President St. Theresa Parent Association

They are passionate and concerned about their children. Understands that this task is overwhelming. Several parents told her that they contacted the transportation department directly and were listened to - appreciated that. Happy to hear that the Board mentioned safety and length of time on the bus concerns – these are two issues paramount to her parents. Safety issue – needs to know who will be responsible for the children if they have to transfer buses? Who will be responsible for young children riding with the junior high? Is the bus driver

responsible for young kids on a crowded bus? Needs to know that the safety of their children is being looked after. Who would be responsible if a young child changes buses and has to go to the bathroom? Stated that 45 minutes is a long time on a bus for a child going to a local school. Appreciates what the Board is trying to do; hopes the Board will take these considerations into their decision.

**Anne** – St. Theresa and Kimball Hill parent

Concerned as to what is driving this whole transportation issue. District mentioned safety and exceeding parent expectations. She is very concerned with the shuttling of students. Has children at both St. Theresa (very early start) and Kimball Hill (late start school) and can see both points of view. Asked how the District can guarantee safety when students are transferred at the junior high? Was disappointed to not get the parent survey; thought they could have been asked their opinion about shuttling. Made personal choice to send her children to Catholic school for a faith-based education. Her special education daughter couldn't go there. Made the decision to move to D15 because of its reputation for special education. Concerned that the dollar amounts and efficiency seem to be the big issue.

**Laurie Philein** – Virginia Lake parent

Said parent surveys had the wrong time, should not be valid. Said that many VL parents are still unaware that the proposed dismissal time has now been changed to 3:20 p.m. from 3:15 p.m. Of the many reasons given in the bell schedule proposal, not once is safety listed. It is a legitimate issue – the safety of our children needs to be a primary concern. Concerned for the safety of her own children and that of 800+ VL students that will be put in jeopardy if this dismissal time remains the same. Asked each Board member to go to VL at dismissal time and watch how the staff literally put their lives in danger to ensure that the children are safe. Asked them to observe the chaos that happens on Rowling Road when Palatine High School lets out and students are racing out of the parking lot. Said that there are not enough crossing guards. Stated that years ago, there was an accident and VL was promised that their start/stop times would never change. Doesn't understand why this is being overlooked.

**McKanna** responded – Had two comments about the survey not being valid. McKanna views a survey as taking the feedback from 3500 people and making adjustments in the proposal based on that feedback. Asked why would the District do a survey if the District didn't intend to listen to what people had to say? That's why the District moved off the 7:45 a.m. start time. Said it is common practice in the District to make adjustments based on what people tell them.

**Kristin** – Virginia Lake parent

Specifically wants to address the dismissal time change from 3:15 p.m. to 3:20 p.m. Says this time will not work for Virginia Lake because of Palatine HS's dismissal time. The two times are so close that it creates a major safety issue for the children. Stated that it takes at least 20 minutes to clear the VL campus which would put them in direct conflict with the high school. There are students who walk to and from school and many of the high school students drive recklessly. Said it is an accident waiting to happen. Asked why Virginia Lake could not be switched with one of the schools in Tier 1?

**Rebecca** – Teacher at Immanuel Lutheran School, Palatine

She says that her students come every morning and are exhausted. A school start time of 7:20 a.m. is way too early. If public schools don't start that early, the parochial schools should not be asked to start that early. Parents and many of her colleagues support that. Urges the Board not to forget about the parochial schools. Supports that students should not sit on a bus for longer than 30 minutes.

## **Board Discussion of Transportation (continued)**

**Boucher** – Asked what the dismissal time at Palatine H.S. was? Audience members responded 3:30 p.m. Palatine HS starts at 8:15 a.m./ends at 3:30 p.m. High School District 211 is on a two tier schedule.

**Millar** prefers Plan A saying that there would still be a savings with decreased liability due to no shuttling of students. Thinks it is money well spent.

**Boucher** believes that the vote was strictly to set bell times. Thought the Board could discuss/set Plan A or Plan B separately with parameters. Would like both Plans flushed out with parameters. **McKanna** said it would take a fair amount of time to flush those numbers out. It would take time to say which of the children would be shuttled.

**Keenan** asked if Board chooses Plan A how will it affect the bus times, number of children on the bus for both private/parochial students and public school students; hesitates to set a parameter of 30 minutes for bus times without knowing the costs.

**Rowden** asked if the Board could set the bell schedule and then indicate the parameters. Rowden is concerned about the safety issue at Virginia Lake, both Plan A and Plan B have VL in the second tier. Asked if switching VL to tier 1 complicates everything else that has been planned? **Fleming** indicated that Virginia Lake is paired with Winston Campus (junior high and elementary). Both VL and Lake Louise switch with Winston Campus.

**Nohelty** clarified that Plan A was developed with a target time of 30 minutes or less; 60 students or fewer on the buses. The number of buses does increase. Those parameters were already set; some routes are longer than 30 minutes but not longer than 45 minutes. Both **Keenan and Boucher** would like to see the equivalent statistics for Plan A as they were given for Plan B.

**Rowden** asked what is within the District's control to ensure safety and address the concerns of VL parents. More crossing guards? Additional traffic light? Stated that if high school students are breaking speed limits continuously – the District should work with the police, communicate with the high school if this is an ongoing concern. This shouldn't be tolerated. **Nohelty** indicated that he has had conversations with the Palatine Police and the high school.

**Silverman** said that there is a motion on the table to approve a bell schedule at 7:55 a.m. and 8:45 a.m. start times.

**Keenan** would like to see more details on Plan A before voting; asked how long it would take to get those numbers? Keenan would prefer keeping the 4-tier system until she found out if the number of children on the bus goes down, time on the bus goes down. For Keenan, it is not an issue of bell schedule vs. cost – it must be together.

**Boucher** said that there is an issue of waiting too long to make a decision; parents need to start making daycare plans, etc.

**Nohelty** thought that there are two different issues: 1. bell times and 2. costs/efficiency Said that both plans demonstrate efficiency.

**Rowden** stated that the Board could vote on the start times now, and then set the parameters. Indicated that the Board asked the District last April to create a reasonable, fiscally responsible

system. The Board can set the parameter for no shuttling. Board can set the parameters and then the District can spend time creating the plan.

**Boucher** stated that what the Board is voting on is if the Board wants a two-tier system period. Board can negotiate the parameters; details on routes, shuttling, etc.

**McKanna** wants a decision on either Plan A or Plan B. Then the Board can come back with parameters.

## **Action Item – Proposed Bell Schedule**

### **Vote to approve a two-tier system with a 7:55 a.m./8:45 a.m. start times (Plan A)**

Approved 5:1

Boucher, Mikula, Millar, Rowden and Silverman voting “yes”

Keenan voting “no”

### **Vote to approve Plan A with no shuttling of parochial school students**

Unanimously approved.

## **Board discussion regarding transportation parameters**

**Boucher** asked the rest of the Board if they wanted to give the transportation department direction as to the upper limits of bus route times.

**Rowden** thought that the Board has to deal with reality just like the Board did with class sizes. Has to set an average, now there are some situations where children are on the bus too long.

**McKanna** asked if the transportation department had any comments as to next steps. The District now has clear direction on start times and no shuttling decision by the Board.

**Anderson** said that giving the department parameters is helpful. Indicated that there are students that could not get to any school in 30 minutes because of the way the population of the District is now.

**McKanna** asked the department to come back with a realistic schedule, bus routes, times, etc. Perhaps have 95% of the routes within 30 minutes? Asked when could the Board get more detailed information?

**Fleming** said that she would first pull St. Theresa students off the routes that were generated and recreate the parochial school routes again. Some could be 15 minutes and some could be 45 minutes because the students come from the far corners of the District to St. Theresa.

**Silverman** asked if the parochial school students would stay on the same bus as the public school students or have their own route.

**Fleming** confirmed that there would be dedicated routes to parochial schools and dedicated routes to the public schools.

**McKanna** indicated that rare expectations would be identified. The transportation department will be back in about two months with additional details.

## **Executive Session**

Board went into executive session at approximately 9 p.m.