

**GROTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 10, 2023 @ 5:30 P.M.
REMOTE MEETING**

Members Present: Kim Shepardson Watson-Chairperson, Andrea Ackerman-Vice Chairperson, Dean Antipas, William Horgan, Elizabeth Porter, Matthew Shulman, Rita Volkmann, Beverly Washington, Jay Weitlauf

Also Present: Susan Austin, Sam Kilpatrick, Ken Knight

Chairperson Shepardson Watson called the meeting to order 5:30 p.m. The Chairperson stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the transportation bid.

Susan Austin stated that we received two transportation bids and asked Ken Knight to brief the board. Ken Knight said that they worked with Mike Kennedy, a transportation consultant, who has experience with our district as well as area districts. Some items discussed with Mr. Kennedy was who would pay for fuel, where buses would be housed, and our current 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. schedule. It was decided that it would be best if Groton continues to purchase the fuel versus having the transportation company purchase it as they would be making assumptions as to where the cost would be going and they would also add a markup. It would also be more efficient if we purchase the fuel ourselves. Housing the buses within town would be more efficient as they would not have to travel as far to get to our students. We may also be able to recoup some property tax with having buses housed within our borders.

Ken Knight stated that six bus companies were contacted regarding the bid. The bid was also advertised in the paper. Three bus companies, DATTCO, First Student, and STA, came to the pre-bid conference. STA was the lowest bid with a 21% increase in the first year. Mr. Knight spoke with other districts, and all are experiencing double-digit increases in transportation due to changes in the bus industry, such as wage increases. Mr. Knight and Sam Kilpatrick recommend going back to STA to see if the 21% increase can be spread out over a number of years.

Rita Volkmann shared that at least 30% of all buses in Connecticut need to be electrified by 2030. She wanted to know if we have applied for available funding and what we are doing to electrify our buses. Mrs. Volkmann inquired as to STA's plans for electrifying their buses. She also does not want to see a five-year bus contract.

Liz Porter asked if the five-year contract is standard in our region and is a three-year contract available. Ken Knight replied that it is a three-year contract with a two additional year extension, which is somewhat standard. Sam Kilpatrick stated that the two-year extension is at our option.

Rita Volkmann ask why we are the only school system that does a 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. schedule. Susan Austin stated that this bid did not include a 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. schedule; rather, it is a daily rate/mid-day run rate schedule. Field trips during the day will cost extra, as will late buses.

Andrea Ackerman asked whether reopening the bid is an option. Ken Knight stated that we could do so but run the risk of bids coming in higher.

Jay Weitlauf encouraged having staff meet with STA to discuss the district's needs. Susan Austin suggested that perhaps STA could possibly structure their bid differently so their 21% increase is not realized in one year.

MOTION: Volkmann, Ackerman; to adjourn at 6:28 p.m.
PASSED - UNANIMOUSLY