

Coventry Board of Education
Coventry, Connecticut

Transportation Committee Meeting
Approved Minutes of Tuesday, September 19, 2023
Administration Building Conference Room

Committee Members Present:

Eugene Marchand, Chair
Peter DePaola
Emma Eaton (attending virtually)

Also Present:

Jennifer Beausoleil, Board Chair and Ex-Officio

Administrators present:

Dr. David J. Petrone, Superintendent of Schools
Robert Carroll, Director of Finance and Operations
Christian Marcinczyk, Transportation Liaison

Audience: Jon Hipsher, M&J CEO; Nicole Irvine, M&J Dispatcher; and several citizens.

I. Call to Order

E. Marchand called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. Audience of Citizens

John Birdsey, 21 Timber Trail, was present to talk about the unpredictable timing of the bus runs.

Nicole Olzinski, 21 Kathy Circle, was present to speak about bus 13 and how her children take bus 15 in the afternoon and the lateness of the afternoon bus.

Emilee Boulay, 25 Meadow View Drive, was present to speak about her daughter's bus stop and her claim that it is unsafe for her to walk from the stop to her house.

Nicole Olzinski, spoke again and said adding any stops would add more time to already long routes.

E. Marchand stated the long bus runs and transportation issues are not unique to Coventry, but this is a problem state-wide.

III. VOTE: Approve the Minutes of August 2, 2023

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the August 2, 2023 meeting

By: P. DePaola

Seconded: E. Eaton

Result: Motion passes unanimously

IV. Information: Review of Parent Concerns

E. Marchand reviewed the letters of concern that were sent to the Committee by parents and specifically read one by a parent who could not attend tonight's meeting.

C. Marcinczyk reviewed the log she kept on parent calls and concerns. She said most of the issues had an easy fix. She reviewed the bus stop on Meadow View Drive and explained the reasoning for keeping the stop as is.

J. Beausoleil said, usually students' stops are adjusted when they get to first grade, as only kindergartners have stops at their doors. E. Marchand said the Committee specifically asked that bus stops be consolidated and for buses not to go down cul-de-sacs.

E. Marchand asked for a motion to either reject the request or accept it. The Committee continued to discuss the details.

P. DePaola asked for an update on the bus routes before a decision is made. He said he is in favor of adding the stop if there are enough drivers and to accommodate safety. E. Marchand said this request is an issue, even if we had 18 drivers, it is something we have been looking at reducing for years. E. Eaton said she would like to hear an update on the transportation situation first as well. E. Marchand said he does not believe an update would change his mind on this item.

E. Marchand agreed and moved to agenda item V and asked for an update on the bus routes and transportation in general.

V. Information: Bus Route/Transportation Updates

Mr. Hipsher reviewed the current situation regarding the availability of bus drivers, which is still terrible. He said by the end of the week we will be short 3 drivers. He added that there is one person who may be able to start at the end of the month. He continued to review the hiring status.

Ms. Irvine reviewed how bus routes are split and noted that the same routes are split to keep consistency for students and families.

E. Eaton said if we are not able to have bus route 2 restored, she asked that the three routes be re-written to consider those students/families. Mr. Hipsher said that can be done, but he could not guarantee that there would not be further changes. Committee members were in favor of re-writing these three routes. Dr. Petrone offered to have early drop off for bus 2 families. The Committee discussed these details. Ms. Irvine said she could get it re-written by the end of the week.

E. Marchand asked about ride times. Ms. Irvine talked about what those look like now, with the longest ride being about an hour and 10 minutes.

E. Marchand recognized Mr. Birdsey who asked about pulling a driver from another yard. Mr. Hipsher said we always look at that option and they do it when possible.

E. Marchand continued and asked Ms. Irvine to review any other "hot spots."

MOTION: To go with the option to split bus 2 and give Dr. Petrone the flexibility to have an early drop off for bus 2 students

By: P. DePaola

Seconded: E. Eaton

Discussion: J. Beausoleil confirmed that the early drop off would be for bus 2 students only with Dr. Petrone having the flexibility to adjust as necessary.

Result: Motion passes unanimously

Ms. Irvine asked if we could move two stops from bus 13 to bus 15 to assist with the timing.

MOTION: To move two stops from 13 to bus 15, coordinating with Dr. Petrone and Ms. Marcinczyk

By: P. DePaola

Seconded: E. Eaton

Result: Motion passes unanimously

E. Marchand returned to the concern raised by audience member Ms. Boulay. J. Beausoleil reviewed the policy and noted the current stop was within policy. She added that kindergarten students are the only door-to-door stops. She added that there are a lot of neighborhoods where students walk out to the corner, and it would set a precedent to change just this one.

MOTION: To reject the request to add a stop on Meadow View Drive

By: P. DePaola

Seconded: E. Eaton

Discussion: P. DePaola said it would be great if all students could be dropped off at their homes, but it is not feasible time wise.

Result: Motion passes unanimously

J. Beausoleil thanked Ms. Irvine for her work. P. DePaola thanked the parents for coming and for being patient with the issues at hand.

VI. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 6:07 p.m.

By: P. DePaola

Seconded: E. Eaton

Result: Motion passes unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberlee Arey Delorme
Board Clerk

Approved: October 31, 2023