

Mr. Rasmus called the Millville Area School District Transportation Committee Meeting to order at 5:37 pm.

Those present in the library were Joseph Rasmus, Susan Myers, Gena Maize, Michael Farrell, Susan Farr, Dee Davis, Katie Downs, Doug Bennett, Alex Cavallini, and Jessica Whitmoyer.

❖ Greenwood Friends School Transportation Issue

- Mr. Rasmus began the meeting by reviewing the topics for discussion on the agenda. He explained that the Board met in an Executive Session after the last meeting to discuss this issue.
- Review Chronology of Events with Bluebird Atelier After School Program
 - Mr. Rasmus shared that he spoke with the Business Manager at Greenwood Friends for the first time about this concern in early September. He further explained the events that occurred to bring this issue to the attention of the Board.
 - Mr. Rasmus then reviewed the history of the transportation guidelines. He shared that they were initially reviewed by the Transportation Committee a few years ago and were then approved by the Board and updated in subsequent student handbooks. Mr. Rasmus explained that there was then an update given in the Superintendent's report, as noted in Board minutes, regarding the updated language in August of 2023. Finally, he shared that this school year there was a reminder sent to parents via Sapphire to review the transportation guidelines again. After that communication went out, Mr. Rasmus said that he received more communication about additional students attending the after school program at Greenwood Friends. He contacted the bus contractor who expressed concern with the continuation of the transportation for this after school program. After that, Mr. Rasmus called the Greenwood Friends School to communicate the termination of that transportation effective immediately and encouraged the Business Manager to contact him to discuss it further. Since that evening when Ms. Love sent an email, he shared that he has not had any contact with the Business Manager about the transportation concern, only with parents affected by the transportation change. He added that he was discouraged by the disparagement of him and the Board on social media by the Greenwood Friends administration.
 - Finally, Mr. Rasmus explained the reasons for the adoption of these transportation guidelines. He said that previously, parents would call late in the day to request transportation changes that were not feasible and/or safe when communicated that late in the day. Additionally, parents would write notes and be issued bus passes to ride other district transportation for play dates, sleepovers, etc. which the district could no longer accommodate. The decision was made to only allow for transportation to the student's permanent residence, with accommodations made for custodial agreements.
 - Mr. Farrell commented his discouragement that Ms. Love was a former board member at Millville and did not follow appropriate channels and communication about this issue.
 - Mr. Rasmus agreed and explained that when she could not reach the transportation coordinator, Ms. Love communicated with other secretaries who were trying to fill in for transportation while the coordinator was on an intermittent medical leave.
 - Mr. Farrell communicated that it was his desire to understand this issue fully because there had been so much miscommunication and defamatory statements made on social media about the board.

- Mrs. Myers added that the Board needs to look at the bigger picture about how this will affect more than just the GFS after school program moving forward. She explained that once we allow transportation for one entity, the Board has to do so across the board so as not to discriminate in this stance.
- Mr. Rasmus commented that he agreed and that this has to set the blueprint for all transportation to programs like this moving forward.
- Mrs. Myers then explained that the transportation looks very different for Lewisburg, where the Bluebird Altelier program is also hosted.
- Ms. Katie Downs, community member, then expressed her frustration with this issue. She explained that she did not agree with the way the situation was presented. With her, she had printouts of email communication that she wanted to share with the committee but was concerned about the confidentiality.
 - Ms. Maize answered that she wanted to get to the bottom of this issue and asked her to share.
 - Ms. Downs was concerned with the fact that no one could reach the transportation coordinator.
 - Mr. Rasmus answered that unfortunately, she is out on an intermittent sabbatical.
- Ms. Downs then asked if the Committee was aware there was communication since the previous April about this program and transportation.
 - Mr. Farrell answered that he has been seeking out information and talked to staff members who were involved in the communication. He reiterated his discouragement for the way that the administration at Greenwood Friends has handled themselves in light of this issue. Additionally, he explained that he has spoken to community members on both sides of the issue. Then, he asked why Greenwood Friends was not proposing to transport the students.
 - Ms. Downs answered that GFS does not have a van or means to provide this transportation. She explained that she did the research about this and it would be about \$120 a day to pay someone to provide transportation.
 - Mr. Farrell commented that there might be people who are retired or may have the ability to drive these students daily.
 - Ms. Downs was concerned about the safety of this plan.
 - Mr. Farrell answered that the individuals would have to have clearances and all training as is required for a school driver. He believed that based on the price of the program that transportation could be figured into that cost.
- Ms. Downs then explained that she is struggling with this decision because this program at GFS is the consistent after school care for her son.
 - Mr. Alex Cavallini, community member, commented that he understands the reason for the transportation guideline language change from a few years ago for the purposes of stopping the last minute changes for convenience. However, he asked the Committee if there could be any grace given to families like this one who were using this program for care five days a week consistently.
 - Mr. Farrell answered that yes, but his concern was once the district makes one exception, it will not be able to stop there and other exceptions would have to be made.
 - Mr. Alex Cavallini asked if that could be written into the policy for consistent child care that is happening every day only.
 - Ms. Maize asked if we could consider language like he was suggesting.

- Mr. Doug Bennett, community member, then asked what policy was in place when transportation was occurring to the EIEIO daycare every day.
 - Mr. Rasmus answered that he understood the transportation was in place for this daycare because there are no sidewalks there for the safety of those students walking to and from school.
 - Mrs. Myers answered that yes, that was the reason for the transportation previously to and from EIEIO daycare.
 - Mr. Farrell commented that the owner of the new daycare in that facility was going to provide her own transportation in a van for students moving forward.
 - Mrs. Myers added that Central Columbia had a list of approved facilities they would transport students to before and after school. She questioned why no one from Greenwood Friends was there to discuss this and work with the district to figure out this issue.
- Mrs. Whitmoyer commented that she understood the hard position Ms. Downs and her family were in with this issue. She said she was frustrated by the way this was handled and asked if the Committee could consider having an approved list of programs such as this one to which the district would provide transportation as many other local schools do. Additionally, she expressed that the language “consistent” would mean that a child’s childcare would need to be every day. Mrs. Whitmoyer believed that this after school program would be considered after school childcare for this family.
 - Ms. Downs shared that she did attend the open house at the newly opened Learning Tree daycare center, and she did not feel that it would be as enriching as having her son attend the Bluebird Altier program at Greenwood Friends School as well as being more expensive than the GFS program.
- Mr. Cavallini asked if it was possible to create language requiring these programs to have their own transportation after two years or something to that effect.
 - Mr. Farrell answered that whatever language they decided to propose would have to be reviewed by the school solicitor.
 - Ms. Downs commented that she believed based on the current language of “consistent care” that her son should be transported to the after school program.
 - Ms. Maize asked if there were other students enrolled in the program who would be going every day like their son.
 - Mr. Bennett answered that he believed that their son was the only one attending full time but there may be others coming up who are enrolled similarly every day.
 - Ms. Maize asked if the language could say that the care must be consistent every day, five days a week and that when there would be changes, there must be a fair amount of notice as deemed appropriate by this Committee.
 - Ms. Rosenberger commented that adding the number of days would make the language more specific than just saying “consistent.”
 - Mr. Rasmus agreed that not having the number of days in the language does broaden the scope of who would be transported.
 - Mr. Bennett asked if the parent could elect the same days every week for transportation but not necessarily five days a week.
 - Ms. Maize shared her concern about the safety of that plan because it would be regularly changing the plan every day and may cause students to get on the wrong transportation.
 - Mr. Farrell raised his concern that if we say five days a week, that would work for some parents, but not for all and this issue may come back once we have to say no to the next family.

- Ms. Downs answered that she is coming to the Board fighting for her son and her family.
- Ms. Maize answered that if the policy states five days a week then we have the ability to answer appropriately. She added that other schools already have language like this.
- Mr. Rasmus commented that he never imagined that the definitions of child care would be called into question.
 - Ms. Maize agreed that some board members wanted this definition to be more defined. She added that in the future we also have to consider what the limits are for capacity for our buses because at some point, that may also be an issue.
- Mrs. Farr then asked if the facility that the district would transport would need to be accredited as a childcare facility.
- Ms. Maize added that there was another suggestion made that the district could designate pickup and dropoff locations like other schools do.
 - Mr. Bennett asked what the closest dropoff spot is to Greenwood Friends School for a bus.
 - The Committee discussed the dropoff spots closest to this location and the van run that is taking students to and from Greenwood Friends for daily education.
 - Ms. Maize asked if the van the district has could be used for this transportation.
 - The Committee needed to get more information on this van run.
 - Mr. Rasmus explained that the administration would work out the logistics of this transportation if the Board elected to move forward with new language allowing for this to take place.
- Ms. Maize asked what the Committee would like to recommend to the full Board so that there is a resolution for this family.
 - Mr. Ferrell answered that he did not feel comfortable moving forward with any language that was not reviewed by the solicitor.
 - Mrs. Myers commented that the biggest key to this proposed language would be the addition of the “five days” caveat and that legal would be involved.
 - Ms. Maize answered that other schools have that same language.
 - Mrs. Myers added that she felt there needed to be language including a facility’s accreditation status.
 - Ms. Rosenberger commented that additionally a list of approved facilities would be helpful to operationalize this language.
 - Ms. Maize asked again what the next steps were for this family.
 - Mrs. Myers answered that this would need legal review.
 - Mr. Rasmus commented that he spoke with the solicitor about this issue but that we were awaiting feedback.
 - Ms. Rosenberger reiterated that there also needed to be a “time period” included in the language for any changes that need to be made to allow for that change to be coordinated appropriately. Additionally, she shared that she was concerned with the flexibility afforded with this particular after school program and the inevitable changes in transportation that would happen because of this flexibility afforded to parents.
 - Mr. Rasmus agreed that there should be language about the transportation that it would need to follow the district calendar.
- Ms. Downs asked how this language change could be added to the Board agenda.

- Ms. Maize said that there could be an update on the issue placed on the agenda but not necessarily a motion because there needed to be some steps taken before that could happen.
- Mr. Rasmus commented that he would be meeting with board members from Greenwood Friends on the same day as the next board meeting.
- Ms. Rosenberger explained that there did not necessarily need to be a motion on the agenda, but if the Committee wanted to, the topic could be on the agenda, and therefore, the board could take action on that item following the meeting with Greenwood Friends if they desired.
- Mrs. Myers asked that there be some information given to the rest of the Board and some language proposals.
- Mr. Rasmus clarified that the topic could be placed on the agenda and if the Board needed to table the motion or postpone it, that could happen. However, in absence of the topic on the agenda, no action could be taken.

ADJOURNMENT

The Committee adjourned the meeting at 6:53 pm.

Chelsea Rosenberger
Assistant Board Secretary