

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
(Official)

August 12, 2010  
Elizabeth, New Jersey

A special meeting of the Board of Education was called on August 12, 2010 at 7:00 p.m., in the Multi Purpose Room, Donald Stewart Center for Early Childhood Education, 544 Pennsylvania Avenue, Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Board Vice President Marie Munn presented the following statement at 7:35 p.m.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. This is a special meeting of the Board of Education. Pursuant to New Jersey Statutes and the rules adopted by the Board of Education, notice of this meeting was sent to The Star Ledger, The News Record and Cablevision of Elizabeth on Thursday, August 5, 2010. In addition, this notice is posted on the Bulletin Board in the lobby of 500 North Broad Street, and pursuant to this act, a copy has been filed with the City Clerk of Elizabeth.”

“I wish to extend a warm welcome to everyone present to this August 12, 2010 meeting of the Board of Education. We are here to govern, provide management oversight, and make policy for the district. The Superintendent manages the district. This is a meeting of the Board in public, not a meeting of the public.”

“This meeting is being recorded and will become part of the Elizabeth Board of Education permanent record. In order that the recording will adequately reflect the proceedings, please refrain from talking while others are speaking. I also ask that you silence the sound on your electronic devices. Since it is legally mandated that these proceedings be accurately recorded, I may have to ask for order periodically should noise begin to interfere with our recording capabilities. I am pleased that you have taken time this evening to join us. Thank you for your interest in the Elizabeth Public Schools.”

“There will be a public portion for citizens to address the Board. Participants for the public portion must sign in one hour prior to the advertised start of the meeting so that they may have the opportunity to speak. The sign-in sheet states the name, address, telephone number and reason that the person wants to comment, whether it is an agenda item or a general education comment.”

Present: Pastor Burgos, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Mr. González, Mrs. Munn, Messrs. Nazco, Trujillo (arr. 8:30 p.m.) – 6

Absent: Messrs. DaSilva, Donoso, Perreira – 3

Superintendent of Schools Pablo Muñoz, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary Harold E. Kennedy, Jr., Board Attorney Kirk Nelson, Esq., Assistant Superintendent for Schools Jennifer Barrett, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Olga Hugelmeyer, Assistant Board Secretary Donald Goncalves, Executive Director of Human Resources/Labor Attorney Karen Murray, Comptroller William Greene, and members of the public were in attendance.

Dr. Greene gave the invocation.  
Pledge of Allegiance  
National Anthem  
Pledge of Ethics  
Core Beliefs and Commitments

Personnel Report – Retirements, etc.

A motion was made by Mr. González, seconded by Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, that the report be accepted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Pastor Burgos, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. González, Nazco,  
Mrs. Munn – 5

Negative: None

Supplemental Personnel Report – Resignations, etc.

A motion was made by Mr. González, seconded by Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, that the report be accepted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Pastor Burgos, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. González, Nazco,  
Mrs. Munn – 5

Negative: None

Authorizations Report – Authorization to Submit Application, etc.

A motion was made by Mr. Nazco, seconded by Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, that the report be accepted.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Pastor Burgos, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Messrs. González, Nazco,  
Mrs. Munn – 5

Negative: None

The first reading of the Action Planning for State Monitoring NJQSAC Policy File Code No. 2255 was done.

The first reading of the Budget Planning, Preparation and Adoption Policy File Code No. 3100 was done.

The first reading of the State Funds, Federal Funds Policy File Code No. 3220/3230 was done.

Mrs. Munn presented the following public participation statement.

“At this time, the microphones are open for public comment to those who have signed in prior to this session. I shall call individuals to the microphones based on the order of the sign-in. Each statement made by a participant shall be limited to three minutes in duration. The total time of public comment shall be limited to sixty minutes. No individual is able to yield their time to another individual. All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer; no participant may address or question Board members individually. The following rules for public participants shall apply: time limits will be strictly enforced, no personal attacks on individuals, no vulgar or indecent language, a person may address the Board no more than once during a single meeting, speakers should refrain from naming individuals, and comments or questions posed during public participation will not be debated. As a reminder, this is a meeting of the Board in public, not a meeting of the public.”

Since there were no citizens to address the Board, Mrs. Munn declared this portion of the public meeting closed.

Superintendent Pablo Muñoz stated that this meeting is in compliance with the Board’s policy on management oversight, that the Board has gone through an intensive two year training both off-site and on-site with the Reform Governance in Action<sup>®</sup> program, that the Elizabeth Board of Education is one of only a few honored school boards that have been selected for this national recognition training funded by The Broad Foundation, that it is an award of over \$300,000. to train this Board in Reform Governance in Action<sup>®</sup>, that he is very proud to have

completed the program with this Board, that we have one final session next week with our consultant on-site and that the public is welcome to attend the public meeting.

Mr. Muñoz explained that each quarter the Board has a schedule of workshops in which they dig deep into some operations or structural components of the district, that it is good governance, that this is probably one of the few New Jersey School Boards that actually conduct management oversight workshops to dig into the different components, that right now there is a three year cycle of management oversight workshops and that the presentation tonight is on the Transportation Department. Mr. Muñoz explained the organizational line of the Transportation Department starting with School Business Administrator/Board Secretary Harold Kennedy who reports directly to him, then Assistant Board Secretary Donald Goncalves, Director of Plant, Property and Equipment Luis Couto, Assistant Director of Plant, Property and Equipment Luis Milanés, and the Coordinator of Transportation Lester Dominguez. Mr. Muñoz introduced Mr. Kennedy who presented the team responsible for the management oversight workshop on the Transportation Department.

Mr. Lester Dominguez, Coordinator of Transportation, stated that he appreciated the opportunity to come before the Board with members of the Transportation Department staff to present the Management Oversight Transportation Workshop. Mr. Dominguez stated that the purpose is to provide the Elizabeth Board of Education with an oversight of the Transportation Department, that the vision is to be one of the best Transportation Departments in the State of New Jersey and that the mission is to provide excellent transportation experiences and services to inspire every student to think, to learn, to achieve and to care. Mr. Dominguez stated that the Transportation Department Budget is \$14,885,010. for the 2010-2011 school year including approximately 23% for salaries, 1% for overtime, 50% for contracted transportation services, 17% for Early Childhood contracted services and routes, 2% for Union County Educational Services Commission for management services, 2% for Aid in Lieu of Transportation, 2% for maintenance and 2% for fuel. Mr. Dominguez explained a budget comparison chart for the last five years, that in 2006-2007 the budget was \$15,184,992. and that since then we have taken on additional routes with a lower yearly budget without layoffs or cutbacks in service. Mr. Dominguez stated that the biggest money saver to date has been tiered route bidding, that in the past the routes were bid out individually but since our district utilizes staggered start and end times we were able to group routes together and bid them out to contractors as packaged routes with the end result being a lower per route cost, that in the past the cost was between \$35,000 and \$40,000 per route and now we are paying approximately \$24,000 per route which brought a huge savings to the district.

Mr. Dominguez stated that the drivers and bus attendants are the first point of contact for many parents and students, that our team members are reminded that they are among the most visible employees of the district, and that the public sees them performing their job which can result in a perception being formed. Mr. Dominguez stated that our team members understand that their attitude can affect a student's motivation to learn, so they work hard to ensure that our students receive professional and courteous service. Mr. Dominguez explained the types of personnel in the Transportation Department including 14 twelve-month bus driver/utility person positions, 18 eleven-month bus driver/utility person positions, 1 ten-month bus driver/utility person position, 41 ten-month multi-purpose bus attendant positions, 11 eleven-month bus attendant positions, 1 secretary, 2 supervisors and a coordinator. Mr. Dominguez explained the requirements of the school bus driver/utility person including the CDL Class B driver license with P and S endorsements, physical checkups every 2 years, background checks every 4 years, random drug testing performed onsite, and motor vehicle abstracts pulled every 3 months. Mr. Dominguez explained that the CDL license allows a person to drive a commercial vehicle at a classified weight, the P endorsement allows the driver to transport passengers in a commercial vehicle and the S endorsement allows the driver to drive a school bus with students on board.

Mr. Dominguez explained the daily assignments of the drivers who work from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., that when they are not driving they are assigned to various jobs throughout the district including field trips, custodial duties, warehouse duties, bus cleaning, and yard duties and that there are mandatory driver weekly meetings held every Thursday at 2:00 p.m. in the bus yard

where the Pledge of Ethics, weekly announcements, safety refresh announcements and weekend jobs assignments are announced. Mr. Dominguez stated that the bus attendants ensure that our students are properly seat belted, that all aisles and passageways are kept clear, that they assist students entering and exiting the school bus and cross students to and from the bus and that they are part-time employees who ride on 11 of our contractor routes. Mr. Dominguez stated that the multi-purpose bus attendants follow the same procedures as the bus attendants and are full-time employees who work for food services between their morning and afternoon routes. Mr. Dominguez explained the organizational chart for the Transportation Department which is part of the Plant, Property and Equipment Department. Mr. Dominguez stated that all of our Transportation Department team members receive safety training each year and that we review the safety procedures with our staff. Mr. Dominguez stated that we contract outside vendors to perform training workshops for our team and that this year we are planning to have the American Red Cross train our team on First Aid procedures and CPR.

Mr. Dominguez introduced Joseph Padlo, Supervisor of Transportation, to present the safety procedures of the Transportation Department.

Mr. Padlo stated that safety is one of the most important aspects of the Transportation Department. He explained the safety procedures including the preventative vehicle maintenance program and ensuring that our buses are in compliance with OSHA, Federal, State, and municipal regulations and stated that our proactive pre-scheduled maintenance has helped reduce vehicle downtime, improve reliability, and lower overall transportation running costs. Mr. Padlo explained that we perform preventative vehicle maintenance inspections at regular intervals to predict and prevent problems and to schedule repairs for minimum impact on vehicle availability, that the school bus drivers play an active role in the proper maintenance of their bus by discovering minor problems that can prevent them from becoming major ones that can affect the safe operation of their school bus, that they are conducted daily prior to start and end of a trip or a route, that the drivers use the Electronic Vehicle Inspections Report (EVIR), that the reports are stored for the life of the vehicle which is 12 years, that EVIR allows our district to receive reports digitally, simplifies the entire pre- and post-trip inspection process, and complies with all DOT mandated pre- and post-trip vehicle inspection regulations, as well as OSHA equipment inspection requirements. Mr. Padlo stated that the pre-trip inspections are required by law, that EVIR requires the driver to walk around the vehicle in order to perform the inspection, and that the reports are transmitted wirelessly to the district's vehicle database. Mr. Padlo stated that mirror grid adjustments are performed every 3 months, motor vehicle inspections are performed twice a year by New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission Inspectors which meets with the Federal and State requirements in each on-site inspection, checking over 180 items, that the vehicle condition reports and maintenance records are checked, that all vehicles used to transport children to or from school or school-related activities must meet these inspection requirements and that all of the district's school buses are equipped with safety equipment including seat belts, seat belt cutter, first aid kit, triangle reflectors, emergency exits, body fluid cleanup kit, camera system, GPS tracking, crossing arm and fire extinguishers.

Mr. Padlo stated that the Elizabeth Public Schools bus fleet consists of 24 fifty-four passenger full-size buses, 5 thirty-six passenger full-size buses, 3 full-size wheelchair buses, 10 mini-buses, 1 wheelchair mini-bus which will be delivered this week, and 1 modified medical bus for a total of 44 vehicles. Mr. Padlo explained that flat-nose school buses were considered to be the safest bus on the road at one time because they allow for high visibility of students crossing in front of the bus but that is no longer the case with the invention of the crossing arm and a more compact engine. Mr. Padlo stated that the visibility of a driver viewing a student crossing in front of a bus has been greatly increased allowing for the conventional type school bus to be considered just as safe. Mr. Padlo explained that the district moved to conventional type school buses 2 years ago which are approximately \$10,000. less expensive per bus and then used that extra money to purchase air conditioning on our buses so that all the new buses include air conditioning. Mr. Padlo stated that by law the Elizabeth Public School buses are decommissioned after 12 years of use allowing us to maintain a young, fresh, and safe fleet. Mr. Padlo stated that the mobile video surveillance systems help promote a safe environment for both students and employees, that they deter bullying and crime, identify security threats, reduce false

injury claims, and assist with parental concerns or complaints. Mr. Padlo stated that the bus fleet is equipped with multiple cameras on each bus, that there are 4 cameras on each full-size bus, 3 cameras on each mini-bus, and 4 cameras on each wheelchair bus. Mr. Padlo stated that our GPS system can pinpoint bus location, provide detailed route analysis and offer turn-by-turn route planning, and real-time bus tracking and location information on all school buses equipped with this state-of-the-art technology, that the traveled routes are stored digitally, the vehicle location can be acquired immediately and the web-based program is accessible anywhere. Mr. Padlo stated that the new state-of-the-art digital radio system allows us to block out unwanted radio transmissions from unauthorized persons, that the Motorola-Moto-Turbo system allows us to contact drivers directly and privately, and that the system works like a Nextel phone and is managed in house. Mr. Padlo explained that to ensure that our buses run properly and effectively, we have a system in place that consists of an electric heating block that sits on the engine and is plugged into an external source which allows the engine to start promptly and properly and in addition allows the buses to warm up without idling in the cold morning. Mr. Padlo stated that our buses are fueled at designated fueling stations throughout the state, that each bus is assigned a fuel card and each driver is assigned a PIN number which allows the district to monitor who fuels the bus and when. Mr. Padlo stated that the medical bus is used as a mobile nurse's office and that a nurse rides along with our driver to Early Childhood Providers to provide medical services to our Pre-K students.

Mr. Padlo introduced Michael Rijo, Supervisor of Transportation, to present the services of the Transportation Department

Mr. Rijo stated that during the 2009 school year the Transportation Department was responsible for the safe busing of 6,642 students to and from school every day and that the safety of the students is the main priority and concern. Mr. Rijo stated that with our sophisticated routing software everyone in the office has access to the routing software giving them the right tools needed to speak with parents including the route numbers, pick-up times for students and where the stops are located and that the software ties into PowerSchool giving us accurate addresses for students. Mr. Rijo stated that in accordance with State law, N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1 in order to qualify for transportation the student enrolled in grades K-8 must live more than 2 miles walking distance from their school or if the student is enrolled in grades 9-12 must live more than 2.5 miles walking distance from their school, and that PreK students enrolled in school must live more than .5 miles walking distance from their school. Mr. Rijo explained that the Elizabeth Board of Education has lowered this requirement for our district's lottery schools, that in order to be eligible for transportation to School Nos. 7, 26, 29, 30, and 31 students must live a minimum walking distance of .5 miles from the school. Mr. Rijo explained that special education students do not require a minimum distance from their school in order to qualify for transportation and that their IEP determines whether or not they receive transportation. Mr. Rijo stated that over the last two years we have established a partnership with NJ Transit for bus tickets at a discount rate for children who do not qualify for busing.

Mr. Rijo stated that during the 2009-2010 school year, the Transportation Department provided transportation services for 2,210 field trips, that School Dude, a web based program which is used by the district for other services, is used to schedule field trips without conflicts in dates and allows the availability of buses on dates requested. Mr. Rijo stated that transportation services are provided to all after school program students and the students are dropped off at their neighborhood school. Mr. Rijo stated that transportation is provided to all of the athletic programs in Elizabeth from games to practices, that transportation is provided to over 750 students every Saturday for different programs throughout the school year including Saturday Recreational Program, Project Adelante, and Contagious Curiosity. Mr. Rijo stated that transportation services are provided to community based programs that are Board approved including United Youth of New Jersey, and the S.O.A.R. programs. Mr. Rijo stated that transportation services are provided to many of our summer programs including Summer Recreation Program, Contagious Curiosity, Summer Arts Institute, Extended School Year Program, Developing Mathematical Understanding Program for students with disabilities.

Mr. Rijo explained that there are two kinds of bus stops, regular education students are picked up at corner stops and PreK and special education students are picked up at home; that the stops are kept away from hazardous areas, that new stops are reviewed with an on-site visit, and that students are assigned to corner stops that are no more than ¼ miles from their home. Mr. Rijo stated that we have the capability of handling 33 tiered routes with our staff and that all other routes are contracted out to vendors. Mr. Rijo explained that the first morning bus route starts at 6:30 a.m. and finishes by 7:30 a.m. and the second morning route starts at 7:30 a.m. and finishes by 8:30 a.m., that the first afternoon route starts at 3:00 p.m. and finishes by 3:45 p.m., the second afternoon route starts at 3:45 p.m. and finishes by 4:30 p.m. and the after school program finishes at 4:45 p.m. and the route is finished by 5:45 p.m. Mr. Rijo stated that State law requires us to transport any student living in the City of Elizabeth that is eligible for transportation regardless of what school they attend, that we provide transportation services to students that attend private schools that are under 20 miles from the student's home and over 2 miles for K-8 students and over 2.5 miles for 9-12 grade students. Mr. Rijo explained that if a student qualifies for transportation we are obligated to provide transportation to the student and that if there are not enough students attending a school to justify the cost of a bus route then we pay the parents Aid in Lieu of Transportation which is an amount set by the State. Mr. Rijo stated that the district contracts out 150 routes in Elizabeth, that we perform spot inspections on the contractor routes regularly, and that a spot check consists of following the bus to ensure that they are following procedures, boarding the bus and checking to ensure that the students are wearing seat belts, checking driver and vehicle paperwork and documenting any problems that are encountered. Mr. Rijo stated that we are in the process of phasing into bus route bid specs that our contractor buses must be equipped with the same tools that our buses are equipped with including camera systems and GPS tracking. Mr. Rijo stated we hold our contractors accountable just as we hold our team members accountable, that with some help from the Essex County Educational Services Commission we put together a list of offenses and penalties that were introduced into our route bid specs last year and that when a contractor does not perform, they are fined and held accountable for their actions.

Mr. Dominguez thanked Joseph Padlo and Michael Rijo. Mr. Dominguez explained a web-based GPS tracking demonstration including locating a bus on a route. Mr. Dominguez stated that there is a conventional school bus outside for everyone to see.

Mr. Trujillo thanked Mr. Dominguez and the Transportation Department for the presentation and asked the Board members if there were any questions.

Mr. Nazco thanked the Transportation team for the very informative presentation and asked if the contracted bus companies require their bus drivers to go through the same screening and credential process that we require.

Mr. Dominguez responded that the contracted bus companies do require the same screening and credentials and we request copies of their paperwork and keep a copy in house to make sure that they are complying.

Mr. Nazco asked if the contracted fleet of buses is as old or older.

Mr. Dominguez stated that they follow the same motor vehicle inspections as we do, that the State enforces the regulations, and that if a bus is heavier then it can be kept up to twenty years.

Mr. Nazco stated that the next bid package will require GPS and cameras and asked if that means that the contracted bus companies do not have them now. Mr. Nazco stated that the GPS is a very powerful tool to see exactly where a bus is especially if parents have questions.

Mr. Dominguez explained that cameras were in the last bid package and every bid after that so that all of our recently bid contracted routes have cameras on the buses, one of the companies that we have now also has GPS tracking on its buses, that one of the reasons we have not put it on the bid specifications is that the GPS tracking would limit the availability of contractors to bid on our routes and would increase the cost per route, that we have notified them that is the direction that we are heading.

Mr. Nazco asked Mr. Dominguez to elaborate on private schools, number of students, how many buses are currently used to service them.

Mr. Dominguez stated that he does not have the information with him tonight but the routes used for private schools are through the County Commission as shared services, that we share the cost of the transportation, and that our buses and bus drivers are not doing the routes but that it is part of the contracted services.

Mr. Nazco asked who is responsible for maintaining order on the bus, that sometimes there are a group of students that are rowdy and is that the job of the aide or the job of the driver and how do they manage that problem.

Mr. Dominguez stated that we tell the driver that they are the pilot of their vessel and they are in charge of the bus regardless, that the aide does their best to manage the students, that there are moments when we have had drivers pull over to assist the aid, for the most part we leave it up to the aide and the driver does help the aide.

Mr. Nazco asked if there is a procedure to train the drivers and aides to handle situations like this and do we constantly train them.

Mr. Dominguez stated that this past year we had an outside company come in and provided a training course on handling students with special needs and disciplinary issues, that we have disciplinary reports that the aides fill out which are sent to the main office of the school with a copy kept in the transportation department, that the principal and parent meet with us to figure out a way to make sure we keep order on the bus, such as having the student assigned the seat right next to the bus attendant. Mr. Dominguez stated that since we installed the cameras on the buses, the drivers have noticed a difference, that the students come in and notice the cameras and there is less vandalism on the bus.

Mrs. Munn thanked the Transportation Department for the great presentation and asked how it is determined which routes are contracted and which routes our buses handle.

Mr. Dominguez stated that all our special needs routes are done by Board of Education buses except for the out-of-district special needs routes, that the rest are done on a case by case basis, that when School No. 7 opened we were able to handle the transportation routes, and that most of the lottery schools and PreKs are contracted bus routes. Mr. Dominguez explained the exception of School Nos. 7 and 52 based on their location and how the transportation of students can be worked into our routes to be efficient with our time.

Mrs. Munn asked about the multi-purpose attendants and if they are on the contracted buses and do we provide attendants for all of the buses.

Mr. Dominguez explained that there are eleven bus attendants that ride on the School No. 26 eleven routes ever since the school has been open and that we provide the bus attendants for those routes. Mr. Dominguez explained that when Battin was transporting students a few years ago we provided multi-purpose bus attendants and once the Battin routes were eliminated then they were brought onto our routes. Mr. Dominguez stated that the contracted companies provide their own attendants except for a few routes that we provide. Mr. Dominguez stated that we have 41 ten month multi-purpose bus attendants and 33 bus drivers so that each bus driver has a multi-purpose bus attendant and the others are on contracted routes.

Mrs. Munn asked about the overtime hours, if the overtime is after forty hours of work per week and how is it assigned.

Mr. Dominguez explained that the system was created by the drivers years ago, that it is distributed evenly with the senior bus drivers having the steady overtime which is day to day routes for afterschool programs and other events and the weekend work is rotated for those with less seniority, that it is very transparent with a printout of overtime hours worked for each driver and that if they turn down a job they are charged the hours so that it is done fairly.

Pastor Burgos thanked Mr. Dominguez for the great presentation which was very detailed and easy to understand. Pastor Burgos stated that in the budget it seems that we pay about twice as much for contracted services in the budget as compared to what we spend for our routes and asked if the contracted companies service twice as many students than we do.

Mr. Dominguez stated that he does not have the numbers with him but that the contracted services do transport more students than we do, that we have 150 contracted routes in district and the contracted services number in the budget also includes students out-of-district, and that we do approximately 66 routes in house.

Pastor Burgos asked when there is a need to add a route due to increased enrollment or a new school, how do you determine whether it is best for us to do the route with our resources or contract the route.

Mr. Dominguez explained that if it is a special needs route then we do our best to do the route ourselves, that it depends on what kind of vehicle is needed, if there is increased enrollment at a school we would be forced to contract the services because all of our buses are committed, especially if it happens mid-year.

Pastor Burgos asked how it is determined if a new route is needed for students other than special needs whether to use our buses or contract the service.

Mr. Dominguez explained that it depends on the availability of the drivers, that right now our drivers and routes are the same as last year, that if something changes in the district such as extended day then we would have to make a decision, that if a school dismisses at 3:45 then we would take a route, if available, that is close to that school so that when they finish the first route they would be close to go to the other school. Mr. Dominguez explained that last year about 100 routes were bid that were tiered, that the tiers are based on geographic locations of the schools, for example School No. 30 was tiered with School No. 51, and that a lot of time the students are brought back to the schools if a parent isn't home or other reasons and there is a possibility that when the route is finished the bus would be going back to the school and the bus could continue on the next route.

Pastor Burgos asked when we are faced with a possibility of either a contracted route on a new school that will be long term transportation or buying a new bus and bringing on more drivers which direction do we go and why.

Mr. Dominguez explained that it depends how much time we have and stated that we ordered three buses that we replaced within our fleet and it took over a year to receive the buses because they are built from scratch when they are ordered so it depends how much time in advance we have to plan ahead and purchase buses and hire personnel.

Superintendent Pablo Muñoz commented that during the presentation it was stated that our personnel provide a higher level of service, at least customer service, and he believes that to be true based on the complaints coming in. Mr. Muñoz stated that during budgeting he asked why we don't keep on buying buses and hiring staff. Mr. Muñoz asked if there is some regulatory issue on the decision whether we contract the routes or do them ourselves and is there some efficiency standard that a district could only have a certain amount of buses if they meet this standard and do we know if that is true.

Mr. Kennedy responded that our limiting factor is where are we going to put the buses and that space is a problem.

Mr. Munoz commented that his conversations with Mr. Couto, Director of Plant, Property and Equipment, have been that in order to expand your bus service you also had to meet a State standard of efficiency.

Mr. Kennedy responded that there is a State standard of efficiency but we are meeting that with our own buses and similarly meeting it with our contracted buses. Mr. Kennedy stated that he has discussed it and asked the same question since we are so much better at the job and the concern is where we are going to put our buses.

Mr. Muñoz stated that then the problem is about space. Mr. Muñoz commented that if we need to add services in the district and the decision tree is to contract or do it in house and asked what is the driver behind the decision, is it regulatory, budgetary, or physical space to house the buses.

Pastor Burgos asked Mr. Dominguez to assume the buses are made and ready to go.

Mr. Dominguez responded that the decision is based on budgetary and space, that our cost per in-house route is \$33,000. and at this time the contracted service is less expensive using the tiered routes.

Mr. Muñoz stated that the contracted service routes are less expensive at this time but that in the past it was not the case.

Pastor Burgos asked what made it change.

Mr. Dominguez explained that it was the tiered bid routes that made it less expensive, that in the past the routes were bid in bulk and individually so that if a vendor bid on a route it was for a particular time and the cost included maintenance, overhead and insurance to cover their cost for that route, that if they bid on a second route then the rate doubled. Mr. Dominguez explained that with the tier routing the vendor would be guaranteed a second route and could split their costs between the two routes which resulted in giving us better prices.

Mr. Muñoz stated that in our school design with some opening at 7:30 and others opening at 8:15 it has created an opportunity to tier the bus routes.

Mr. Kennedy stated that when the schools all opened at the same time the vendors knew that we needed all the buses at the same time and the cost was high.

Pastor Burgos commented that it is interesting to see how one thing affects others.

Mr. Kennedy stated that in this economy other districts are cutting back on some of their courtesy busing which allows the vendors to free up their buses.

Mr. Dominguez stated that now there is an abundance of vendors, even as far away as Lakewood, that are bidding lower rates which is better for us and for the taxpayers.

Pastor Burgos suggested that a comparison chart be kept for the cost of in-house routes as compared to contracted services routes and that right now it is less expensive for the contracted services but it may change in the future and we might not know if we don't keep a comparison chart to review.

Mr. González thanked the Transportation Department for the informative presentation to understand how the system operates. Mr. González commented that the chart of penalties is very interesting and asked if we have offending vendors that have violations, and asked if it happens weekly or if it is a rare occurrence.

Mr. Dominguez stated that we do have offending vendors and we deduct whatever the amount of the penalty is from their monthly invoice, that they were not major penalties but we hold them accountable. Mr. Dominguez explained that they charge us a daily rate for every route and the penalty amounts are higher than their daily rate so they are actually losing money whenever something happens. Mr. Dominguez stated that it is rare now, that it happened a little bit at the beginning of last year but toward the end of the year the contractors straightened out.

Mr. González asked if it is part of the contracted bid.

Mr. Dominguez responded that it is part of the bid, that we worked with the Essex County Educational Services Commission and they provided samples of their bid specifications and that we compared different bid specifications from different school districts and commissions throughout the area and modified it to make it fit our needs.

Superintendent Pablo Muñoz asked how long it takes a driver to complete the pre-trip and post-trip inspections using the electronic device.

Mr. Dominguez responded that it takes between four and seven minutes unless there is a problem and then it can take up to ten minutes. Mr. Dominguez explained that the inspection requires the driver to walk around the bus, scan the tag, and then check the different items in each of the eight zones.

Mr. Muñoz asked if all the buses require diesel fuel.

Mr. Dominguez responded that many of our buses use gasoline.

Mr. Muñoz asked if the 6,642 students transported is the total number of students transported or the number of students transported by the Elizabeth Public Schools transportation staff.

Mr. Dominguez explained that 6,642 is the total number of students including out-of-district students but it does not include Aid-in-Lieu transportation which is an additional 332 students.

Mr. Muñoz asked how many students are transported in the After School Program.

Mr. Dominguez responded that he did not have the information with him tonight.

Mr. Muñoz requested the information be provided as a follow-up to these questions. Mr. Muñoz asked about the athletic trips and how many games in a year do we provide transportation for the students. Mr. Muñoz stated that the presentation showed a combination number for games and practices.

Mr. Dominguez stated that he would provide the information.

Mr. Muñoz stated that because we have limited options for facilities many of our students are transported from our schools to Warinanco Park, that our tennis team is transported to Kenilworth, and that many times our underclassmen are going to another facility to practice or play games. Mr. Muñoz stated that the varsity teams may have to rotate through Williams Field for outdoor sports.

Mr. Dominguez stated that we also transport students to Galloping Hill golf course.

Mr. Muñoz asked for an explanation of the PowerPoint presentation of the afternoon bus routes and if there were two drop-offs at the end of the afternoon bus routes, that the second afternoon route starts at 3:45 and ends at 4:30 and that afterschool finishes by 4:45 and the route is finished by 5:30. Mr. Muñoz asked if the neighborhood schools that close at 4:00 have routes.

Mr. Dominguez explained that the afterschool route is the third route in the afternoon, that we have a 3:00 dismissal which is primarily our special needs students and early childhood students, then there 3:45 dismissal which is for the lottery schools and our high schools, and then we have the afterschool program that dismisses at 4:45 and the routes typically finish at 5:30.

Mr. Dominguez stated that there are three routes that end about 7:00 for a program at the high school.

Mr. Muñoz stated that there are no 4:00 afterschool routes because they are neighborhood schools and the students walk to and from school. Mr. Muñoz asked about the shuttle between high schools.

Mr. Dominguez responded that there is a shuttle transporting students between each of the high schools and Dunn Sports Center or Williams Field to give students opportunities to participate in certain clubs, football team or wrestling team, and that the shuttle is packed with students everyday.

Mr. Muñoz thanked Mr. Dominguez, his staff and especially the bus drivers and team in the field and stated that they do a wonderful job and we get very minimal concerns from the constituents.

Mrs. Munn asked about the discounts given for NJ Transit tickets and if the offer is still available and that her own daughter had to take mass transit and was not aware of the discount bus tickets. Mrs. Munn asked if parents are made aware of the program.

Mr. Dominguez stated that the Transportation Department notifies the building principals and that most of the students using mass transit are in high school. Mr. Dominguez explained that the students attending neighborhood schools are close enough to walk and that the students attending the magnet and lottery schools are bused. Mr. Dominguez commented that although it is communicated to the principals we can send a letter to notify the parents of the discount NJ Transit tickets.

Mr. Muñoz commented that we have different instruments, including Board Briefs and Instant Alert, that can be used to notify the parents.

Mr. Trujillo asked what is the life service of a bus.

Mr. Dominguez explained that service of a bus is twelve years for the size buses we have in our fleet and it is twenty years for heavier buses. Mr. Dominguez stated that some of our contractors have buses that old and tend to have more problems with them.

Mr. Trujillo asked if the maintenance of the buses is done in-house or contracted.

Mr. Dominguez responded that the maintenance is done through State contracts.

Mr. Trujillo asked if there ever was a comparison to see if it would be cost-effective to have the maintenance done in-house and what would be the challenges.

Mr. Dominguez stated that at one time the Plant and Property Department considered it and the prices were astronomical and that it far exceeded what we spent on maintenance.

Mr. Trujillo asked when was the last time we purchased new buses.

Mr. Dominguez stated that three new buses were purchased this year to replace old buses and purchased an additional bus from a grant we received from Special Services.

Mr. Trujillo commented that at one time it was mentioned that propane fueled buses would be the future of our fleet and asked the reason why it did not materialize.

Mr. Dominguez stated that the cost of the bus was too high, that there are hybrid buses which are double the cost of what we pay now and we would not get a return on what we save, but we are still following it to see if anything changes.

Mr. Trujillo asked if the life service of the bus is based on the model of the bus or regulations and if the fuel used is factored into the life service of the bus.

Mr. Dominguez explained that there is a State regulation that says we can not run our buses longer than twelve years. Mr. Dominguez stated that our diesel engines tend to last longer and take more of a beating than gasoline engines, which is the type of engine used by a propane bus, that the maintenance on a gasoline engine is less expensive than a diesel engine, and that they are different engines.

Mr. Trujillo asked if the life service on a propane bus shorter.

Mr. Dominguez responded that we wouldn't know since it is brand new technology, that it is something new and that we didn't want to take the risk of going into an unknown territory.

Mr. Trujillo thanked Mr. Dominguez for the informative presentation and stated that after adjournment of the meeting there would be a tour of the school bus.

Mr. González commented that the management oversight workshops are very educational to learn how each department operates.

On a motion by Mrs. Munn, seconded by Mr. Nazco, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

The motion was carried by the following vote:

Affirmative: Pastor Burgos, Mrs. Castillo-Ospina, Mr. González, Mrs. Munn, Messrs. Nazco, Trujillo – 6

Negative: None

Harold E. Kennedy, Jr.  
School Business Administrator/Board Secretary