

**Policy Committee Meeting
December 15, 2009
6:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

Attendance: Commissioner Elliott (Chair); Commissioners White and Brennan.

District Staff: Chuck Johnson, Rashondra Jackson, Jerome Underwood, Maria Mello-Dupre, Wayne Kittleberger

Board Staff: Debra Flanagan

Commissioner Elliott convened the meeting at 6:31 p.m., immediately following adjournment of the Finance Committee meeting.

I. Review and Approval of Minutes from November 17, 2009 Policy Committee meeting

Motion by Commissioner Powell to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2009 Policy Committee meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Brennan. **Adopted 3-0.**

II. Presentation by Erie 1 BOCES regarding Review of Policy Manual

Karen Marcucci and Janel Hallgren of Erie 1 BOCES provided an overview of the overall review process for updating the Policy Manual, the materials to use in the review, and the criteria used to determine whether a revision to existing policy is needed.

Commissioner Elliott asked how often the Policy Manual should be updated and requested guidelines as to how to ensure that it is kept current. Ms. Marcucci stated that Erie 1 BOCES offers a service to provide quarterly policy updates, and this service is recommended for implementing ongoing updates after the entire Policy Manual has been completed. She explained that the policy updates contain recommended revisions based on changes to law and/or regulations, the rationale for the recommended revision, and an indication as to whether it is a required policy.

In terms of the current process of updating the Policy Manual, Ms. Marcucci stated that all revisions agreed upon by the District must be noted on one copy, which is submitted to her. At that point, Ms. Marcucci will contact Board staff with any questions regarding the suggested revisions; the suggested revisions will be incorporated into the draft Policy Manual unless there is a conflict with law or regulations. A second draft containing these changes will then be issued to the District for subsequent review. Ms. Marcucci explained that most school districts complete the review and update of the Policy Manual with the second draft, which is then submitted to the full Board of Education for approval.

Janel Hallgren stated that the timeline for completion of the manual has been extended because Erie 1 BOCES did not begin the process for several months, but she stated that one year should be sufficient for completion. If the updated Policy Manual has not been completed by December 31, 2010, Ms. Hallgren stated that the District would incur an additional \$2k cost to extend these services with Erie 1 BOCES for another year.

III. Medicaid Compliance Policy

Chuck Johnson, General Counsel, informed the members of the Policy Committee that his associate, Rashondra Jackson, has performed most of the work in reviewing the draft policy and preparing it in collaboration with RCSD staff.

Commissioner Powell commented that she had not heard of any suggestions to revise the draft policy.

Motion by Commissioner Brennan to approve the Medicaid Compliance Policy. Seconded by Commissioner Powell. **Adopted 3-0.**

Noting that the policy leaves most of the guidelines regarding implementation of a Medicaid Compliance program to be determined in Superintendent regulation, Commissioner Powell inquired whether much change was anticipated between the final regulations and the working draft presented in this meeting. Ms. Jackson replied that a section is planned to be added regarding claims processing, but the information has to be streamlined from an initial 25-page document.

Commissioner Powell asked whether it is anticipated that the Superintendent would finalize this regulation by December 31, 2009. Ms. Jackson confirmed this timeline, stating that this is required by law.

V. Update regarding Transportation Capacity

Jerome Underwood explained that the staff in the Transportation Department have been examining the extent to which students in kindergarten through 3rd grade could be accommodated on existing routes and buses since this issue was raised at the last Board Business meeting. He stated that letters were sent to all parents of students in these grade levels (808 letters), with 320 responses received and 277 requesting transportation. Mr. Underwood cautioned that 13-14% of the addresses in the Chancery database are not accurate, so principals were also contacted regarding students who may need transportation.

Examination of the location of these students, existing bus capacity and routes revealed that approximately 90 students could be accommodated at this time within the existing structure. To provide transportation to all students in kindergarten, an additional 26 buses would be needed at a cost of \$434,343. To accommodate all students in kindergarten through 3rd grade, another 47 buses would be needed at a cost of \$1,476,078.

Commissioner Elliott voiced concern that the process is too slow, even for absorbing students on existing buses and routes and given the onset of winter weather. She inquired as to the barriers to expanding transportation services. Maria Mello-Dupre, Transportation Director, stated that the District is concerned about limiting the ride time for students and time limitations are also necessary for the operation of the existing two-tiered transportation system. She explained that buses farthest from school have capacity to absorb extra students, but have no time for additional pickups because of the distance traveled. The buses closest to the school are already carrying the largest number of students and also do not have time to add stops to pickup any more students. Ms. Mello-Dupre stated that some extra capacity must be allowed to accommodate eligible students.

Commissioner Powell asserted that she has observed buses with empty seats and these are farthest from the school, primarily because the zone boundary is being crossed. She explained that the intent of the Parent Preference/Managed School Choice policy was to allow parents to choose their child's school within each zone, fostering development of a range of quality schools within each geographic sector (zone) of the District. Commissioner Powell suggested improving enforcement of existing zone boundaries to increase the number of available buses to maximize capacity without incurring additional cost. She inquired as to the number of buses currently transporting students across zone boundaries.

Ms. Mello-Dupre replied that approximately 150 buses are currently transporting students across zone boundaries. She emphasized that the Transportation Department has no control over the location of the student's home and school, as this is up to the Placement Office and other departments to determine.

Commissioner Powell pointed out that allowing these buses to be available by enforcing zone boundaries would free up more than three times the capacity needed to transport all students in kindergarten through 3rd grade.

Mr. Underwood stated that he will press this issue with other administrators to enforce zone boundaries and also collaborate with parents. He asked about the possibility of using a central location rather than door-to-door pickup of students riding the bus.

Commissioner Elliott expressed concern regarding student safety in using a central bus stop rather than picking up each student at their home. Ms. Mello-Dupre noted that home pickup of students creates additional risk of accidents, particularly on side streets in the winter and increases the wait time for students.

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Brennan. Seconded by Commissioner Powell.
Adopted 3-0

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Next Meeting: January 19th at 6:30PM