

ROCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Community & Intergovernmental Relations Committee Meeting
Meeting of the Whole

March 15, 2016

MINUTES

Attending

Commissioners - Vice President Cynthia Elliott (Chair), Commissioner Mary Adams, Commissioner Elizabeth Hallmark (arrived 5:36PM)

District Staff –Adele Bovard (District Liaison and Deputy Superintendent of Administration), Mike Schmidt (Chief of Operations), Linda Cimusz (Interim Superintendent)

Board Staff –Mia Johnson

Vice President Elliott called the meeting to order at 5:35PM.

I. Review of Minutes of January 19, 2016 and February 9, 2016 CIGR Meetings

Motion by Vice President Elliott to approve the minutes of January 19, 2016 and February 9, 2016 CIGR Meetings. Seconded by Commissioner Adams. Adopted 2-0.

II. Presentation: Current Transportation Statistics and the Proposed Concept for Universal Transportation for the RCSD

Ms. Bovard stated that there is current legislation being proposed by the NYS Assembly and supported by Senator Robach and the Governor's Office because of its linked to the Anti-Poverty Initiative. She described the history of the legislation and the role of Vice President Elliott in the initial work to provide parents with the choice to send their children to neighborhood schools and the barrier of the 1.5 transportation requirement. She stated that both elementary and secondary parents are not choosing neighborhood schools because of the transportation requirement and safety reasons. She described the analysis trend document: Pre-K to 6 schools have a geocode for every building and each secondary school falls into the three zones; in year 2015-16, only 1% of students at School No. 1 go to school within their own neighborhood and 32% of students at School No. 34 go to school within their own neighborhood; and there is an average of 17%. She stated that the benefits of students attending schools within their neighborhood include making friends in the neighborhood, engaging with the school in a much richer and deeper way, and having access to the schools' community services. She stated that the grow-out K-8 schools fare even worst with the lowest percentage of students attending school within their neighborhoods.

Ms. Bovard described that the District drafted an initial proposal requesting universal transportation to K-6 schools in year 1, grow out to K-8 schools in year 2, and then to secondary schools within the year 5 plan. She stated that the goal was to ensure that every

student within the District had an equal opportunity to attend their neighborhood school. She stated that it was brought to the legislators with push back and negotiations. She stated that the current legislative language was just received and Rochester is the only district in the Big 5 to receive such language due to its unique link to the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative in the Beechwood neighborhood.

Commissioner Adams asked what happened the concept of the District as a whole. Ms. Bovard responded that concerns included it being too costly and the need to prove that the pilot worked before consideration. She stated that the pilot will be the testing ground to prove that within 3 years the percentage of students attending their neighborhood school increased and creating efficiencies within transportation, it would create a favorable light to expand.

Commissioner Hallmark asked if the transportation contract is for one or two years. Mr. Schmidt responded that there are four years remaining of five year contacts with First Student and Monroe Transportation, and currently entering into the the first year of a five year contract with RTS as of July 1, 2016.

Commissioner Hallmark asked how the transportation contracts will impact the pilot. Mr. Schmidt responded that the general education students are transported by the First Students and students with special needs are transported by Monroe Transportation with wheelchair accessibility and trained drivers like the other K-6 and K-8 Schools. He stated that the schools identified in the pilot are not purely in the Beechwood neighborhood but they are the schools that mainly serve students within the Beechwood neighborhood and are geographically next to that neighborhood. He stated that some schools located in or near the Beechwood neighborhood were not included for the following reasons: School No. 6 is serving as swing space for School No. 15 and all the students for School No. 15 are transported because they are in swing space; School No. 22's anticipated decision of being designated as a swing space so all the children will be transported next year; School No. 10 has 100% transportation based on past decisions. The schools identified in the pilot did not have universal transportation and thought it would be a good idea to test the theory. He stated that the hope is that the number of students who live in the neighborhood will increase accommodating to the students who are within the 1.5 radius. He stated that 33% of students at those schools are walkers and this is unique compared to other neighborhoods and schools. He further stated that there should be results of students returning to the neighborhood and an attendance increase as this is the area where the attendance drives tend to focus. Commissioner Elliott stated that there should also be academic improvement because the students will be in school.

Ms. Bovard stated that the dream is to link the city wifi application and provide students with tablets to do school work on the bus.

Mr. Schmidt stated that children spend almost an entire month of school time on the bus because they are being transported outside of their neighborhoods. He stated that there is a fiscal implication as well as a time implication and its impact on after school programming.

Commissioner Hallmark asked if the attendance for the identified pilot schools is lower. Mr. Schmidt stated that there should be a follow up with the attendance data as baseline data. He also stated that the students on free- or reduced-lunch data and the number of students being transferred outside of the zone would be key data pieces.

Ms. Bovard stated that the Governor's Office called for information. Vice President Elliott stated that the proposal has a cost of almost \$800,000 and in conversations with NYS Assemblyman Gantt, his office was told that it was cost neutral. She asked how is the cost being negotiated with the state legislature.

Ms. Bovard stated that two years prior to her and Mr. Schmidt's work, the proposal was worked on by the former General Counsel Ed Lopez and Chief of Staff Patty Malgieri and they shared with representatives from the Big 5 that it was cost neutral. She stated that both her and Mr. Schmidt never said it was cost neutral, but confident that it will drive efficiencies into the transportation patterns as student remain in their neighborhoods. She stated that the proposal gives three years with a targeted number of schools to prove that it works.

Vice President Elliott asked how are we able to rationalize the proposal for Rochester compared to other cities. Ms. Bovard replied that the proposal was tied to the Anti-Poverty Initiative and will provide bullet aid of \$792,064. Vice President Elliott inquired about where the funding would come from for the next two years. Ms. Bovard responded that there would be a need to evaluate. Vice President Elliott asked if money could come from the Anti-Poverty Initiative. Ms. Bovard replied that there is an UIR process for those dollars that could be submitted directly to the Anti-Poverty Initiative. She stated that bullet aid will come in the first year to expend it on transportation; it can be placed on the ST3 form in the summer which drives aid for the following year so it will drive 88% aid and then will self-fund going forward.

Vice President Elliott asked about its impact of gas prices and will there be cost saving to help fund the proposal in the future. Mr. Schmidt responded that low current gas prices are to the District's benefit. He further stated that the pricing of \$247,520 takes into account the cost of bus per day and the number of buses. He stated that there will be saving for the following reasons: more students who return to their neighborhoods will mitigate the number of extended bus runs; limit the number of runs; more strategic stops per student; multiple stops in a safe area; and balance of K-8 level schedules to use the same bus and driver over the course of the day. He further stated that there will always be citywide draw schools and students in swing space during the foreseeable future providing transportation to those students.

Commissioner Adams asked what is 88% aidable vs. not aidable when discussing global transportation costs. Mr. Schmidt stated that the state will fully aid transportation outside 1.5 miles and every student under the 1.5 mile is 0%. He stated that the aid ratio is set by New York State and the District's aid ratio may be less based on the number of exceptions that must be done. He described that School No. 22 was changed to a swing space at Franklin and 1.5 mile was viewed differently based on the number of sex offenders and busy streets. He stated that it was a large drain on the percentage. He stated that now because they are designated as swing space, it helps the aid ratio tremendously. He stated that the actual ratio

is less based on the number of exceptions and the pilot will limit the number of exceptions and there is a significant benefit.

Commissioner Adams asked how much globally all transportation costs and how much is aidable and not. Mr. Schmidt identified that athletic trips and field trips are no aidable. He stated that transportation to and from school is aidable. Commissioner Adams asked if summer school transportation is aidable. Mr. Schmidt responded that summer school transportation has a different contract and protocol. Commissioner Adams further stated that there is a lot spending on transportation that is not aidable. She expressed wanting more data on what is being spent on non-aidable transportation. She asked what proportion is contributed to the non-aidable costs. She further asked how much is being saved by the pilot and projected impact if given bullet aid. Mr. Schmidt responded that the Chief Financial Officer and her team would have an item analysis. He also stated that that all the non-aidable variables are great for children and provide opportunities. He stated that there are plenty of resources in the Transportation Department and there is a need to build a model with a flexible transportation system. He stated that we are almost there with a flexible model.

Commissioner Hallmark asked why the pilot program is tied to the Anti-Poverty Initiative. Ms. Bovard responded that it was tied to the fear of precedent, they thought that the financial lift was too much for other cities' proposals, and it linked to the Governor's initiative.

Mr. Schmidt stated that there are aspects of the transportation budget that it is outside of the District's control including charter school transportation and the lack of control over the times. He stated that this is a key piece when building a transportation model. Ms. Bovard stated that in her previous experiences in other districts, they would negotiate with the private schools. She paraphrased Commissioner Adams questions: How much does transportation cost; how much is aidable and non-aidable; what is the spending on non-aidable by categories; and what is the overall aid percentage inclusive of all the non-aidable costs. Commissioner Adams stated the importance of being aware of the non-aidable costs as they impact the budget. Commissioner Hallmark stated that it makes sense to negotiate with the charter schools and there should be legislation outlining transportation for charter schools.

Motion by Vice President Elliott to adjourn. Adopted 3-0. Meeting adjourned at 6:14PM.