



**DOVER SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

DOVER SCHOOL BOARD – MINUTES

Meeting Type:	Special Session #6
Meeting Location:	Media Center, McConnell Center
Meeting Date:	Monday, November 23, 2015
Meeting Time:	6:30 P.M.

- A. A special session of the Dover School Board was called to order by Chair Amanda Russell on Monday, November 23, 2015 at 6:34 P.M. in the Media Center of the McConnell Center.
- B. **ROLL CALL:** Present were Amanda Russell, Betsey Andrews Parker, Kathy Morrison, Sarah Greenshields, Doris Grady, Carole Soule McCammon and Michelle Muffett-Lipinski.

Also present were: Superintendent Elaine Arbour, Business Administrator Karen Taylor, First Student Employees, In-coming School Board members Keith Holt and Matt Lahr, Mary Buese, Representatives from First Student and Student Transportation of America.

- C. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Kathy Morrison led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- D. **CITIZEN'S FORUM:** Gary Gagne, 86 Longhill Rd, spoke in support of choosing a transportation company that is best financially for the taxpayers of Dover. He is currently a bus driver for First Student.

E. **AGENDA APPROVAL:**

Sarah Greenshields moved, Michelle Muffett-Lipinski seconded to approve the agenda as presented. An oral **VOTE PASSED 7/0.**

F. **CONSENT AGENDA:**

1. **Nominations:**
 - a. Teacher
2. **Extended Travel (Student Trips):**
 - a. Special Olympics Youth Summit-Waterville Valley (Prelim and Final)
3. **Donations:**
 - a. Toys for Tots Donation

A donation to DHS Food Pantry by NH1 News Network was added to the Consent Agenda for approval.

Betsey Andrews Parker moved, Michelle Muffett-Lipinski seconded to approve the consent agenda as amended. An oral **VOTE PASSED 7/0.**

G. **OLD BUSINESS:**

1. **Transportation Bid Approval**

Dr. Arbour introduced the process for the bids and what had happened since the last meeting. She explained that each company would have 10-15 minutes to present information on their respective companies.



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Ms. Taylor introduced the representatives from both companies with Howard Anderson, Area General Manager from First Student presenting first. He distributed a powerpoint presentation to the Board which is archived with meeting minutes.

Ms. Andrews Parker asked if routes ever change. It seems to her that routes have not changed for years, even when students graduate or leave the district. She also asked for clarification on if students are able to bring musical instruments on the bus.

Mr. Anderson commented that the intention for Dover was to use Edulog software last year for routing. It was difficult to use since exact addresses were required for the software. Mr. Anderson stated it was a challenge due to inability to receive some information from the schools.

Ms. Russell commented that there has been difficulty with the software. She noted that some routes were changed for accuracy due to Paula Tiberio, who has been very receptive. Ms. Russell commented that the routes are the same as when Laidlaw was the transportation company. She believes that routes are a huge concern and should be re-evaluated at least every other year. She continued to say that the Dashboard feature would be a great resource for the district.

Ms. Russell expressed concern that Mr. Anderson had not attended School Board meetings when invited showing unresponsiveness. Mr. Anderson responded that he had some health issues that prevented him from attending meetings at that time.

Ms. Greenshields asked if there is a possibility of a smartphone App for parents to track the status of their student's bus transportation. Mr. Anderson responded that they do not have an App, but parents are able to use a password and find the status online at any time.

Mrs. Grady noted that there have been many changes in stops, streets and a large increase in number of cars. The Silver Street project also has made traveling difficult. She commented that a major change was the increase in number of stops from past years where there were stops between every 5-6 homes. She added that First Student sometimes picks up at every door.

Mrs. Grady noted that she was bothered that this information was not online and parents were not aware of these changes. She stated that the location of the middle school causes a great deal of congestion. She continued to say that there have been some major changes and there always will be problems.

Mrs. Grady suggested that administrators, all school board members, and the transportation company meet to discuss changes and issues.

Ms. Morrison asked if they would be able to accommodate the District if start and stop times are changed in the future.



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Mr. Anderson responded in the affirmative stating they would prefer more time between the start and stop times of each school and it would make it easier. He added that all routes will be revisited and new stops will be considered when the routes are reviewed.

Ms. Morrison commented that parents are contacting her saying that they are not receiving responses when contacting First Student. Dr. Arbour added that when parents call, there are times when a mechanic answers the phone instead of the dispatcher since the dispatcher is driving a bus. There are also times when calls are routed to the Hampton office where assistance for Dover issues is difficult. This happens primarily when they are short-handed.

Mr. Anderson agreed that finding drivers is becoming an issue due to New Hampshire's low unemployment rate.

Ms. Andrews Parker asked for the starting wage of bus drivers and the benefit package. Mr. Anderson responded that bus drivers earn \$19.90 per hour after an introductory period during which time they earn \$16.00. He added that First Student currently pays 80% of a single health insurance plan. Drivers are also able to earn longevity pay for length of service. Each driver is guaranteed 2.25 hours each in the morning and afternoon and can also drive charters for extra pay.

Ms. Andrews Parker asked if the issues could be resolved for next year if Dover School District awards First Student the contract to which Mr. Anderson responded in the affirmative. Mr. Anderson stated that they would hire a location manager and attend regular meetings with the district.

Ms. Andrews Parker asked why some positive things that were done before and not currently being done. Mr. Anderson responded that it will be the mission of the company to do these things again. She commended Ms. Tiberio and bus drivers and felt that she and her staff were sometimes unsupported.

Mrs. Grady asked if there is a survey to show the satisfaction of parents. She asked if Mr. Anderson can provide anything to the Board that would guarantee changes. She reiterated the need for a meeting with all parties to discuss complaints and determine changes. Mr. Anderson agreed and stated that he would put his promise in writing with a penalty if there were still issues. Mrs. Grady added that there will always be someone who isn't happy.

Jeff Finrock and Gregg Stinson presented information on Student Transportation of America.

Mr. Finrock commented that the biggest issue is with routing. Versatran software, which downloads maps of the area, along with student information and lays out routing will make the process easier and better. Once these routes are determined, they are compared with current routes in order to make the most optimal routes. After routes are established, they are reviewed with drivers for their input.



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The staffing plan for STA would include a manager, dispatcher, and mechanic dedicated to Dover. They will also have a local location for Dover.

STA offers a smartphone app to parents at a minimal cost (approx. \$5/month) that will allow them to track the location of their student's bus. This is a cost that may be open to negotiation. Dover can also purchase the APP service separately if STA is not awarded the contract.

Ms. Soule McCammon asked if the Safe Stop App is ever linked to performance to which Mr. Finfrock responded in the negative.

Ms. Russell asked for the hiring process for bus drivers. Mr. Finfrock explained the process stating that all current drivers will be interviewed. If they pass the background check, they will be offered positions. 95% are usually hired and they are rarely rejected unless there is an unsatisfactory background check. Mr. Finfrock commented that there is a relatively high retention rate also which is typically over 6 years if they continue employment after the first few years. Mr. Stinson added that it is in the best interest of the company to hire current drivers. He commented that wages will be competitive and similar to what they are being paid with First Student although this would need to be negotiated with Teamsters. Longevity would remain the same.

Ms. Andrews Parker asked how the same number of students can be transported with fewer seats. Mr. Stinson responded that they would need to meet with administrators to determine the actual number of busses needed.

Ms. Andrews Parker asked what would happen in the next few months so that appropriate new busses could be ordered.

Mr. Stinson agreed that new busses would need to be ordered, but STA would need more information to make an informed order. Larger busses would be ordered if necessary for the number of students. There could be different sized busses ordered if that what was required as determined by school needs. He confirmed that there would be enough time to establish routes for next year.

Mrs. Grady asked how costs would change if changes were required. It was determined that ridership and routes are the greatest challenges that could impact cost. Mrs. Grady commented that the additional cost of the STA contract would be over \$500,000 over the course of 3 years, mostly due to the cost of new busses. The extra cost to taxpayers would be a great deal, especially with the cost of the new high school and career tech center.

Mr. Stinson commented that they followed bid specifications and the contract would be cost effective after the first 5 years, since the fleet would most likely have an additional 5 years of life after the payments are made. The company would also need to find a local facility for the fleet and business. He noted the other add-ons that are included in the contract.



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Mr. Stinson added that the cost of the phone app for parents would be approximately \$50/year. Mrs. Grady noted that there are families that do not have an extra \$50 for a phone App.

Ms. Muffett-Lipinski asked Mr. Stinson if he is confident that a needs assessment can be completed, busses ordered and routes set for the beginning of the new school year to which Mr. Stinson responded in the affirmative.

Ms. Greenshields asked if revenue from the app could be shared with the school district in order to reduce the cost of the transportation service. Mr. Stinson responded that the app is from a sister company and may be negotiable.

Ms. Andrews Parker summarized what would be included in the transportation contract.

- Routing software
- New busses
- Same drivers
- Comparable benefits and wages
- Comparable internet service for locating students

She then asked what qualities make them different from First Student. Mr. Stinson responded that new there would be a dedicated facility for Dove schools, brand new busses, dedicated mechanic and staff for Dover, GPS included, and State of Art technology included.

Mrs. Grady asked if this decision was needed immediately to which Mr. Stinson responded in the negative. She feels there are still unanswered questions and it would be difficult to make a decision at this meeting.

Ms. Greenshields noted that it has come down to optimizing bus routes and type of equipment to purchase. Knowledge of these two items may be able to improve the cost of the bid submitted.

Mr. Stinson thought it would be in the best interest to meet with the Business Administrator to discuss the specifics since there could potentially be ways to save money.

Ms. Russell noted that the likelihood of bigger busses costing less would be low. Mr. Stinson reiterated that the more information provided, the more competitive the bid could be.

Ms. Greenshields stated her assumption that contingencies would be built into the contract and was hoping to discuss nuances of the contingencies. She agreed that more time would be beneficial before making an informed decision.

Ms. Soule McCammon commented that she feels a vote is needed and a decision made at this meeting. Accountability to her is the biggest piece of this decision and her sense was that they had enough information to make a decision.



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Mrs. Grady asked Mr. Stinson why the cost of athletic trips was so much more than First Student. Ms. Taylor explained the process and determined the costs were comparable.

Betsey Andrews Parker moved, Carole Soule McCammon seconded to offer First Student a one year contract contingent on improving bus routes, mechanics and response to service. A roll call **VOTE PASSED 5/2 (Greenshields, Soule McCammon opposed)**.

2. Garrison Roof Project Update, Approval and Resolution

Ms. Taylor updated the Board on the status of the Garrison Roof project. She commented that it is complete and reviewed the cost breakdown for the project. She requested payment of \$8,792.00 to A& M Roofing for additional work. This was due to a change order that included relocation and installation of various drains due to electrical and plumbing infrastructure under the roof.

Sarah Greenshields moved, Michelle Muffett-Lipinski seconded to approve the final payment to A&M Roofing Services in the amount of \$8,792.00. A roll call **VOTE PASSED 6/0**. Ms. Soule McCammon was excused at 8:00 PM prior to the vote.

Ms. Taylor continued the GES Roof discussion by discussing reprogramming of unused funds from 5 different projects for purpose of the study of Garrison School and where to use additional funds. Garrison School is in need of renovations and improvements to correct life safety, accessibility and efficiency issues. The additional funds would pay for a study to determine which projects should receive higher priority. Ms. Taylor continued to say that if the study is done now, the District would be better prepared for the CIP in 2018. The City Council would need to approve the resolution requesting reprogramming of funds.

Mrs. Grady asked why there were remaining funds from the WPS and HSS project. She was a member of both Joint Building Committees and was told there were no funds remaining for the project.

Ms. Taylor responded that the data was obtained from the financial software, but she will verify with the City Finance Director.

Mrs. Grady asked for the sponsor of the resolution to which Ms. Russell answered that the School Board doesn't require a sponsor. There will be a sponsor and public hearing after it goes to the City Council.

Mrs. Grady summarized the JBC process and doesn't see how the School Board could vote on this. She feels the "cart was put before the horse" for the high school JBC process.

Betsey Andrews Parker moved, Kathy Morrison seconded to approve the transfer of appropriations from prior years capital projects and send to City Council so that a resolution can



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be sponsored after which bids will be used to provide accurate numbers for the GES project in the CIP.

Ms. Andrews Parker stated that this would show that the Board is trying to be prepared. Dr. Arbour added that using remaining funds from this year was also considered with potentially splitting the cost over two years.

Mrs. Grady reminded that they do not know where the Garrison School will come in on the CIP. If the money is spent now, it is unsure what will happen at Garrison School.

Ms. Russell added that it would allow systems to be addressed immediately if needed and is a prudent step.

Ms. Muffett-Lipinski commented that this is an initial vote and something larger is needed so that the District needs to know what they are dealing with.

Mrs. Grady suggested amending the motion to clarify that if there is a major issue at Garrison, the money could be used. Ms. Andrews Parker responded that she believes that whatever is needed for Garrison would be approved. There could also possibly be insurance or FEMA for any larger issues. She feels this motion would address the issues better.

Ms. Taylor commented that she would review the reconciliations to determine why there are balances in the JBC accounts.

A roll call passed **5/1 (Grady opposed)**.

H. SCHOOL BOARD MATTERS OF INTEREST:

Ms. Morrison thanked the Garrison Student staff and students for patience during the roofing project. She also thanked Ed Murphy for his assistance with the project.

I. ADJOURNMENT:

Doris Grady moved, Sarah Greenshields seconded to adjourn the special session at 8:30 pm. An oral **VOTE PASSED 6/0**.

Respectfully submitted,
Robin LaFleur, Recording Secretary