

North Pekin-Marquette Heights School District No. 102
Committee of the Board of Education
September 10, 2019
District Office Conference Room
6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

President Knox called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM in the conference room of Georgetowne School. Mr. Sondgeroth took board attendance. Present is marked with an "X".

Knox	Higdon	Shockley	Buhl	Therry	Williams	Vo
X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Other: Mr. Sondgeroth

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION ITEMS

Building and Grounds

GMS Roof – Mr. Sondgeroth reported that the district received a check on Sept. 4 from Liberty Mutual for \$119,871.83. The full cost for replacement/repairs from the damaged gym roof at GMS was approved at \$157,905.44. That amount minus the deductible (\$2,500), depreciation (\$26,546.67) and code upgrades (\$8,986.94) were taken out of the full \$157,905.44 to equal the amount of the check we received (\$119,871.83). The depreciation and code upgrade costs will be paid after certification that the project is complete and the code upgrades have been performed. The code upgrade deals with an upgrade to the layer of insulation beneath the membrane of the roof. The approved amount includes around \$18,000 to paint the ceiling/rafters of the gym due to water staining. Last Friday, Liberty Mutual looked at the gym floor and determined it would also pay for the cost of sanding and refinishing the gym floor due to some water damage in certain areas. The costs for the floor repairs are not included in the total figures above. The roof replacement is tentatively scheduled for the first week of October. The painting and gym floor will likely not occur until next summer or over a break if possible. Mr. Sondgeroth will also get pricing to paint the remainder of the gym at the same time the ceiling is being painted.

District Tractor Sale – Mr. Sondgeroth reminded the board that the old district tractor is being sold by sealed bid. Final bids need to be submitted by 2 PM on Friday, September 13. There was a public viewing of the tractor on September 6, but nobody came to view the tractor.

Transportation

Bus Passes – The Board had discussion it has had in previous years on whether or not the district could offer paid bus passes to students who do not qualify for district busing.

Prior to the meeting, Mr. Sondgeroth emailed board members and asked what information they wanted him to gather so they could fully understand how transportation in the district and in the state of Illinois works. Board members asked for information related to finances, bus costs, bus routes, state reimbursement, rider volume, non-rider volume and laws pertaining to transportation. Mr. Sondgeroth gathered the requested information and prepared maps of busing areas to share with the board at the meeting.

First, the board reviewed some legal issues related to transportation. Mr. Sondgeroth provided some question/answer statements from the Illinois School Law Survey written by school attorney Brian A. Braun.

For which students must a school board provide free transportation to and from school?

Certain types of districts are required to provide free transportation for students residing one and one-half miles or more from any school to which they are assigned for attendance unless adequate public transportation is available. Charter districts, **elementary school districts**, community high school districts, township high school districts and certain unit districts are not required to provide free transportation (although almost all do, including District 102).

When a school district is obligated to provide transportation, must the district transport the student the full distance, door to door, from home to school and back?

No. The school district may establish bus routes with pick-up/drop-off points (bus stops) that are 1.5-miles from the students' homes.

For the purpose of requiring a school board to bus students to and from school, how is the 1.5 mile minimum distance measured?

The 1.5-mile minimum distance is measured from the exit of the property where the student resides to the point where the pupils are normally unloaded at the school attended. The distance measured by determining the shortest distance on normally traveled roads or streets.

When must a school board provide free transportation for students living less than 1.5 miles from school?

The board must provide free transportation for students living less than 1.5 miles when conditions are such that walking constitutes a serious hazard to the safety of the pupil due to vehicular traffic. Transportation need not be provided if adequate public transportation is available. There is a process for conducting a study and to make a finding regarding alleged safety hazards. The initial determination is made by the school board with review by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) in consultation with the State Superintendent of Education. (Note - In 2010, when the district stopped transporting all students and began transporting students using the ISBE 1.5-mile determination and using hazardous routes, Mr. Dickson submitted multiple hazardous route forms to IDOT for approval. Those listed under the "Hazardous Routes" section of our district's Eligible Bus Route sheets the board approves annually were approved by IDOT. Several alleged hazardous routes were submitted to IDOT, but were not approved. Some examples of those not approved are the students walking to RES in North Pekin along streets such as Roosevelt, McArthur, State, etc. Those streets do not have sidewalks or curbing, but do not qualify as hazardous routes due to the low level of traffic on those streets. Therefore those students do not qualify for free busing.)

Additionally, Mr. Sondgeroth communicated with the district attorney. Specifically, he communicated about the issue of school liability for injuries that may occur to students who walk to and from school. He indicated that, in general, the district will not be liable for any accidents of students walking to/from school because the District has no duty to transport those students. The parent has the responsibility to make sure their child arrives safely at school. The attorney stated, "Absent intentional or negligent conduct by the school, the school would not be liable for an injury to a student walking to school who is injured. " The district might be liable if it did not address a known dangerous situation. For example, if the district required a student who lived

less than 1.5 miles from school to walk from River Dr. to school by crossing Radio City Dr./Route 29, a five-lane, high traffic/high speed highway with no pedestrian crossings, the district might be considered negligent if the student were injured crossing that road because transportation was not provided. The attorney further stated that the Board should not feel compelled to offer transportation to students within the one and one-half mile radius due to potential liability concerns. Instead, those decisions should be based on cost and other concerns.

The board also reviewed the district's finances from the transportation fund and what the cost would be to acquire another bus and pay a driver to do extra routes. Overall, the district's fund balance in the transportation fund is strong, with a current fund balance more than twice the District's annual expenditures in that fund. This improvement in the fund balance has occurred over the last several years for different reasons. Field trips have been limited and the costs of those trips have been picked up by students and grants. The state has also begun reimbursing districts for the full amount for which they are eligible. Earlier this decade, the state was prorating the amount of reimbursement eligible to districts, short-changing districts like District 102 tens of thousands of dollars each year.

Additionally, the board reviewed what the annual cost would be to add another bus to the fleet of three buses the district currently has. Based on figures provided by our district bookkeeper who oversees payroll and accounts payable, the projected cost to acquire another bus, driver and pay the annual fuel costs, required inspections and other supply/maintenance costs could be around \$37,300 a year. See chart below.

Estimated Cost	Cost Description
\$12,400	Estimated Regular Route Salary
\$9,000	Estimated Benefits (includes health ins. since all our drivers currently qualify)
\$3,000	Estimated Fuel/Supply Costs (fuel, DEF, replacement wipers, lights, etc.)
\$11,900	Estimated Cost to Lease Bus
\$1,000	Other Estimated Costs (licensing, inspections, maint./repair, phone, training, physical)
\$37,300	Total Annual Cost Per Year to Operate a Bus
Approx. \$790	Per Pupil Based on 47 passengers (two students to a seat)

The board also reviewed information from Mike Stier (Principle Consultant Transportation, Division of Funding and Disbursement Services, Illinois State Board of Education). Mr. Sondgeroth spoke with Mr. Stier on the phone and later followed up with an email to ask him several questions related to offering a "paid busing" option and to see if the paid option created any issues with the district's annual transportation reimbursement claim. Mr. Sondgeroth also asked him, generally, if there was any advice he could provide the board when it comes to selling bus passes or providing paid busing. Here are some of his statements.

- Any money the district collects from parents purchasing bus passes must be reported in the district's annual reimbursement claim. Those revenues would not be considered extra revenue for the board. They would be shown as revenue that help

offset current expenditures and would likely have a negative impact on the district's annual transportation reimbursement claim.

- All new riders (as a result of bus passes) will need to be reported on the district's annual reimbursement claim, but they will be reported as students who live under the 1.5 mile distance, so they will not qualify the district for any additional reimbursement.
- Any fee charged cannot be excessive. "Excessive" is not defined. The district should have some formula for calculating a per-pupil cost for students to ride a bus.
- If the district decides to offer paid bus services, it MUST offer the service to ALL students who currently do not qualify as riders for any of our three buildings. He specifically quoted, "It cannot be limited to a single neighborhood, for example." As a result, the district may need to create extra stops.
- If the district decides to move forward offering a "paid busing" option, but does not have room on the buses to add all of the extra students who want to ride and, therefore, the district needs to find a way to restrict or limit the number of extra riders (i.e. first come, first serve; lottery system, etc.), the district should consult with its legal counsel to get guidance on how to do that in a fair manner.

Finally, the board reviewed the current number of riders on each of the three GMS/RES bus routes. The board reviewed the number of students assigned to each bus, the approximate number who ride on a daily basis (which varies from day to day), the available room on the bus (based on 47-rider capacity) and potential bus pass students (based on current GMS students that live within close walking distance to a stop on that bus's route.) For example, looking at the chart below, Bus #3 has 54 riders assigned to that bus, but only 45 typically ride on a daily basis. The bus only has room for a limited number of extra students (possibly 2-3). Unfortunately, there are 25 GMS students that live within close walking distance to the bus stops for Bus #3 so not all of those students could ride. There is more room for students on Bus #1 and Bus #2. The chart below also does not show RES students who might be close enough to walk to one of the existing bus stops for Bus #1 or Bus #2 if given the opportunity to purchase a bus pass.

GMS/RES Bus Route Riders				
Bus #	19-20 School Year	Approx. # of Actual Riders	Available Room per bus	Potential Bus Passes
Bus #1	25	18	29	13
Bus #2	38	24	23	20
Bus #3	54	44	3	25

After spending some time reviewing all of the information above, as well as looking at maps of the districts busing areas, the board spent a great deal of time discussing the possibility of opening up the buses for non-qualifying students.

The board acknowledges that the district is in a different situation than it has been in past years. The district's enrollment has been dropping at a steady rate, especially over the past 2-3 years. The buses that were once full now have room to accommodate extra riders. That was not the case during many previous conversations about this same topic by the board in previous years. Acknowledging that there is now room, the board discussed many options for how implementing a fair system of allowing non-bus riders to ride the district's buses might look. One of the biggest

concerns that kept coming up during the conversation was the statement from ISBE's Principle Consultant, where he said, "If the district decides to offer paid bus services, it MUST offer the service to ALL students who currently do not qualify as riders. He specifically quoted, "It cannot be limited to a single neighborhood, for example." As a result, the district may need to create extra stops." Opening up the transportation system to everyone who does not currently qualify goes well beyond the scope of what the board intended when deciding to revisit this topic. The original scope of the discussion was intended to address only whether or not the current buses could accommodate some extra riders along its regular routes. The information from the ISBE's principle consultant has complicated the matter. After close to a 90-minute discussion on the topic, it was clear that this issue was not going to be solved in one meeting and that discussion will need to continue.

Finance

Public Hearing on FY20 Budget -- The FY20 budget is scheduled for approval at the September 24 board meeting. That meeting will begin at 6:00 PM as usual, but will begin with a public hearing for community members to be able to voice comments on the proposed budget which has been available in the office for public viewing since August 14.

Summary of Past Budget Activity -- Mr. Sondgeroth shared a summary of past budget activity for the District. This summary includes the final, audited figures from the recently completed FY19 school year. This is for informational purposes only.

Personnel

Review of District Enrollment Trend -- The district's enrollment numbers have been dropping. Mr. Sondgeroth shared a summary of District 102 enrollment figures assembled by Mrs. Donahue. She indicated that these are our sixth day enrollment figures. Mr. Sondgeroth also shared the enrollment figures for the last three years, broken down by grade level. This is for informational purposes only. This is information that is shared and discussed with the building principals as the District looks at staffing needs for the future.

Retirements -- Mr. Sondgeroth shared with the board the letters of retirement from Cindy Rinehart and Aprile Smith. Both will be retiring at the end of December. The two serve as Marquette School secretaries. Mr. Sondgeroth discussed Principals Dietrich's plan for replacing the two secretaries.

Other Items from the Superintendent and Board Members

October 31 SIP Day -- The district continues to spend some time at different SIP or institute days addressing school safety issues. At its opening institute day in August, the staff reviewed the ALICE training Mr. Sondgeroth provided to the entire district at the February SIP day. During the August institute day, staff members again asked for an opportunity to hear what a gunshot would sound like inside the building. This is something other districts have done with their staff. Pekin High School recently conducted an armed intruder drill with students present and police firing off blanks during the drill. District 102 does not plan to have students present, but tentatively plans to use the afternoon of the Oct. 31 SIP day to have the Marquette Heights PD come to the buildings and fire off some blanks in different locations of the building. That will allow staff to have a better idea of the sound. This activity is something the District would communicate to the parents prior to the event so they are aware.

Board Convention – This is a reminder that the board convention is scheduled for Thursday – Sunday, November 21-24. Board members should contact Mr. Sondgeroth with questions about the conference.

Board Election Cycle – Mr. Sondgeroth updated and shared the Board election cycle document he maintains. This document is necessary so the District can certify the exact number of seats it has available with the County Clerk each election. This is for informational purposes only.

Tiger Trot Check – Mr. Sondgeroth reported that community member Frank Hardy took over coordinating the Tiger Trot this year since the parent club was not going to do it. Frank got a late start with the planning, but was still able to raise some money. He presented District 102 with a check for \$459.50.

ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn at 7:45 PM by Higdon. Seconded by Therry. Motion passed by acclamation.



Keith Knox, President



Andrew Shockley, Secretary