

Townshend School Board
Special Meeting
Townshend Elementary School
September 22, 2008 6:00 P.M.

Attendance: Kathy Hege, Craig Hunt, Gregg Morrow, David Dezendorf, Townshend School Board; Deborah Leggott, Townshend Principal; Wendy Houlihan, WCSU Superintendent; Brud Sanderson, Carley Sanderson, Toni Dezendorf, Kathy DeGrenier, Andrea Royce, Walter “Bo” Royce, Kris Jerz, Joe Winrich, Cynthia Davis, Glenn Beattie, Deidre Beattie, Clair Adams, Steven Walton, Dale Davis, Michele Sanderson; Townshend Residents.

1. Call to Order: Kathy called the meeting to order at 6:03 P.M.

2. Discussion of future bus use within the Townshend School District:

- A.** Kathy opened the discussion stating the Board has received requests for additional bus stops this year which raised questions about the effectiveness of the bus, the use and cost of the bus, and the equity of the bus service provided to the residents of Townshend. The Board would like to form a committee of a variety of people to study the effectiveness and cost of offering bus service to the Townshend community.
- B.** Brud stated the bus is an important part of this rural community. Loss of the bus would only transfer the cost of school transportation to the families. He felt the bigger question is how to improve the rider ship and make the bus a more cost effective method of transportation. When Brud attended school, buses from other towns were being paid to pickup and deliver Townshend students to school on Route 30. Would it be possible to contract with Jamaica and or Newfane to provide limited bus service? Kathy replied Townshend would have to pay the same contract for bus service as Jamaica and Newfane are paying for their Leland & Gray students. Andrea stated many of the contracted buses providing service for Newfane and Jamaica are late when they arrive at Leland & Gray.
- C.** Craig asked if the bus rider ship could be increased and parking congestion decreased by changes of student's driving to Leland & Gray? Andrea stated more students are riding the bus. Kathy asked for the bus mileage. Andrea said the bus is driving 279.2 miles a week and averages 38 to 40 miles per day.
- D.** Bo Royce stated the bus wasn't designed to drive on the State Forest road or West Hill. Parents not on Route 30 and Route 35 have the added expense of needing to transport their children to the bus stops. Deirdre stated the front of the school is congested during drop off and pickup time with the parents driving. Steven said anything the community can do to increase the rider ship would be a good thing. Glenn pointed out that more parents could use the bus stops on Route 30 and Route 35. This would help to reduce the congestion at the school. Parking around the church and school on the common needs to be addressed. Bo Royce stated the congestion is also an issue during “Senior Meals”. A fire truck or ambulance would not be able to drive though Common Road.
- E.** Toni asked for the student rider ship. Andrea reported the morning Rt. 35 / Harmonyville run averages 23 students, the afternoon run 25 to 27 students. The morning West Townshend run averages 26 students, with the PM West Townshend bus run has 27 students. Craig asked for the capacity of the bus, which is 71 students. Depending on what sports or after school activities, the high school / grade school mix will change slightly. Several people pointed out the bus is never full.
- F.** Kathy asked who would be willing to serve on the committee to determine the feasibility and equity of providing bus service to Townshend. The committee should be made up of people who use the bus for transportation and those who don't use the bus service. This committee should bring information back to the board to allow decisions to be made prior to the next years budget being developed in October. The committee should look at practices being used in other parts of the country, many school districts are condensing bus stops and how other schools are dealing with the tremendous fuel prices.
- G.** Cynthia asked when the larger bus was purchased. Andrea replied the school district had a smaller bus during the 1980's, but it was replaced in 1998 with the larger bus.
- H.** Deirdre asked what the life expectancy of the bus was. Andrea said much of the maintenance items needing replacement have been replaced, the body is in good shape. The current mileage is 89,962.5 miles, which is low mileage. Glenn reports the bus should last at least three more years.
- I.** Kathy DeGrenier asked how many field trips are taken using the bus.

- I. Andrea reported between 10 and 15 trips a year, but some trips don't use the bus because the trip doesn't return in time for the afternoon bus runs to be completed.
 - II. Glenn asked for the trips to be better coordinated, so the bus can be used, instead of making the parents drive the trips. Deirdre asked if the bus could be used for winter sports
 - J. Craig asked if the Board is under any requirements the school faces under Special Education, state funding for parents who don't have transportation for students with special needs? Kathy stated the student's IEP (special education Individual Education Plan) would have those requirements. Craig asked about using the 9 passenger van owned by Leland & Gray for short or small trips. Deborah stated she hasn't had much luck getting the van for use.
 - K. Andrea stated when Leland & Gray had a half day & Townshend had a full day, it was not cost effective to provide transportation for the Leland & Gray students.
 - L. Glenn said the law shows where partial transportation should be given, but the statute does not state to whom the partial transportation should be given.
 - M. Bo Royce asked where the school's responsibility to the student transportation ends. Kathy replied the school is responsible for the students when they are on the bus, but not at the bus stop.
 - N. Toni asked what is the cost difference between contracting and owning a bus? Kathy said it is less expensive to own a bus. Once the state reimburses Townshend for transportation and Leland & Gray reimburses Townshend for transporting high school students, the bus doesn't cost Townshend much money. Until the maintenance increases or the increased fuel cost, this bus is cost effective. Bo Royce asked if the capitol expenditures fund could be used to offset the fuel cost. Kathy replied the town wouldn't have that funding to pay for a new bus. We currently have about \$24,000 set aside for capitol expenditures.
 - O. Cynthia asked how much a new bus would cost. Craig and Glenn replied a new bus would cost around \$100,000. Wendy stated the state reimbursement is 50% of the allowable transportation costs.
 - P. Deirdre asked if the school board and select board have discussed the congestion around the town common. Andrea stated some congestion relief has been provided by Leland & Gray.
 - Q. Kathy said the charge of the committee would be to consider what the transportation would look like without the bus or with a smaller bus.
 - I. Bo Royce, Andrea Royce, Cindy Davis, Kathy DeGrenier, Clair Adams, Craig Hunt, Glenn Beattie, Jessie Bishop will make up the committee.
 - II. Kathy stated the committee should explore all options with the bus. Will Townshend have a bus, should the board look at purchasing a smaller bus, will the bus runs increase, what should be done to increase rider ship. Basically, what should the transportation of Townshend students look like next year? Andrea said she was able to find a driver to drive the Townshend bus this year making transportation more cost effective.
 - III. Cynthia asked if the school could change the school hours? Craig and Kathy reiterated anything is on the table.
 - R. Kathy asked Wendy for information on the bus contracting / collaboration being done within the WCSU area. Andrea pointed out a Grafton/Athens bus provides transportation from Leland & Gray during the afternoon, maybe they could be approached to provide some transportation.
 - S. Wendy will provide the legal requirements for student transportation.
 - T. The committee should bring information to the board during the 2nd meeting in October (October 27th) or to allow the information to be included in the budget to be finalized during late November.
 - U. Diesel fuel costs to the town were \$4.16 on August 7, \$3.87 on August 21, \$3.79 on September 4, and \$3.72 on September 18. The bus was fueled on September 3rd and has used 110 gallons so far.
 - V. Bo Royce asked the Board to provide the detailed expenditures for the bus. The school administration will provide the information needed.
 - W. Another option to look at might be to not provide an afternoon bus run during the Wednesday afternoon winter sports, since last year only two students were provided bus transportation.
- 3. Adjourn:** Kathy thanked everyone for attending and participating in the meeting. By unanimous consent the Special Meeting adjourned on 6:54 P.M.

Respectfully,

David Dezendorf, Vice Chair.