

**MINUTES
TOWN OF CONCORD
CITIZENS TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
Tuesday, May 24, 2012
7:00 PM-9:30 PM
Clock Tower Room
Harvey Wheeler Community Center**

Present: Lisa Bergen, presiding
Ray Bruttomesso
Louise Haldeman
Mark Hanson

Absent: Abraham Fisher

Also present: Concord Police Safety Officer Kevin Monahan

Citizens present: William Plummer

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 by Chair Lisa Bergen.

2. The Minutes

May 15th meeting were approved and copies made available to the public.

3. Correspondence

Ms Bergen reported that she had received a letter from Mr Patrick Everett which made some suggestions about the use of some portions of the present CCHS building following construction. The letter will be forward to the CCHS building committee as being the body more able to respond.

4. Chair's Report

Ms Bergen reported that Regional School Committee will be starting the process of seeking the necessary construction permits from the various Town Boards.

As determined at the CTC meeting of May 15th, a letter has been sent to the Regional School Committee asking that two more people be appointed to this committee, preferably from Carlisle but if not then from Concord as suggested by the Concord Town Moderator. The Regional Committee has received the letter but is seeking advice from their legal counsel before responding. In regard to the same issue a letter has been sent to the *Carlisle Mosquito* asking that anyone from Carlisle interested in serving offer themselves to the Regional School Committee in the event that the Regional School Committee decides to appoint Carlisle residents after all. To date there has been no response.

A subcommittee of the Regional School Committee has met to draft a charge to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) which the School Committee will be appointing. Since both groups will be seeking similar information it will be necessary to be sensitive to the demands being put on the School Administration. It was suggested that before committee members start looking for information, they check with the chair as a great deal has already been gathered. While the two committee will be separate they will be working towards similar ends.

5. Citizen Comments

Mr. Plummer asked if the Carlisle Representatives to the Regional School Committee were in possession of information which the rest of the Regional School committee did not have. There seemed to be no suggestion though as to what type of information that might be.

6. Reports and Issues for Discussion

Safety - At this point in the discussion Officer Kevin Monahan joined the table. Officer Monahan is the recently appointed safety officer for the Town of Concord. He explained the records

which are kept by the Police Department on every incident which involved a school bus or other Town or School owned vehicle, to which the police have been called. There has been conflicting information about bus safety as there are several different ways in which such data is kept. Large publicly traded bus companies such as First Student, report accident data to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. Smaller companies and systems run by the schools such as ours do not. However the Concord School Bus department keeps records of everything that happens to a school bus no matter how small. Most of these really do not pertain to safety and do not require the assistance of the police however without understanding the basis of the data, confusion is possible and has led to some recent misunderstanding in the press and in the community.

Officer Monahan explained the way data is kept and also said that more detailed data is available and can be accessed. In response to questions from the committee, he said that much of the data does not indicate school bus driver errors as the main cause though certainly there have been some accidents directly attributable to the bus driver. Most common are accidents which involve another car which has run into or sideswiped a bus. Although actual school buses are the safest vehicles on the roads, getting on and off the buses can be dangerous. Unfortunately too many people do pass buses even though the warning lights are on. Weather conditions also play a role. Passengers on the bus would be transported to the hospital if there is any question of injury.

In response to a question, he stated that all community police departments keep similar records. In the case of private bus companies which have submitted bids to the School Department, checking the Police records in the towns where such a company presently operates would help in getting an "apples to apples" comparison. He agreed to help committee members with further research. With the thanks of the committee for his assistance Officer Monahan then left and the committee turned to related issues.

The committee identified five types of safety: student, bus, depot, driver, community.

Short term and long term transportation needs - It will be the responsibility of the School Committee to find parking for the buses for the immediate future. During construction parking the buses at the high school would seem inadvisable as there will be many construction vehicles coming and going. It is possible that the buses may be parked at the Sanborn building as a temporary solution. The schools are renting a facility in Billerica to handle the maintenance again for the immediate future. Accommodation for the drivers must also be considered and a new starting point may affect the bus routes.

The CTC will look at the longer term needs. As Carlisle does not want to participate in any future permanent bus facilities at the high school, the School based TAC will not consider any high school site. The CTC however is free to do so.

The Public Schools own some additional land which might be used for a future bus facility although none are ideal. Of most immediate interest would be the old landfill site, not the capped area. The site is close to the high school and far enough from residences as to not be an annoyance. Unfortunately that land appears to be committed to the Walden Woods project. Questions were raised by the committee as to whether the Selectmen should be urged to consider the matter further especially if the Walden Woods project is unable to raise the necessary funds or agree to the other town uses for the site in a timely manner. It was pointed out by one member with a long memory that the Public Schools have from time to time made land available to the town for other purposes and have moved the buses twice in living memory in order to accommodate Town needs for elderly housing and the construction of the "Red Brick Building" on Keyes Road.

A closer look at sites will be undertaken during future meetings. At least 2 acres would be needed to construct a parking facility which would contain room for the 36 school buses and also the 27 other vehicles which are owned by the schools which include trucks, lawn equipment, snow plows etc. Office space and a facility for the drivers as well as parking for

latter are needed and any such bus site must be able to be secured against theft and vandalism.

As buses need fuel there must be a way to get it to them. At the moment the Concord DPW does not have the fuel capacity to do so. Either the DPW finds a way to accommodate perhaps by getting a larger fuel tank, or the transportation department needs to either have a fueling station or arrange for "wet fueling" such as having a gas truck visit and fuel the buses directly. Clearly there will be need for some serious discussions between Town and Gown before it will be possible to present the Town of Concord with a choice of workable alternatives.

Considering and measuring the intangibles - Defining and listing the intangible benefits will be pursued by Abe Fisher and Louise Haldeman for future meetings.

Cost analyst of the options - Measuring and comparing the relative costs of in house and out sourced bus system will need to include many factors. It is generally recognized by all major studies of the subject that an in house system costs less than an out sourced one in the long run. However to retain our own system the Town of Concord may need to agree to some capital expenses either for land or facilities which it may be unable to undertake.

The committee will also seek ways to compare our in house system with outsources system in owns with similar school populations and school layouts.

Ultimately the CTC hopes to be able to present the town with several fully explored alternatives.

7. Action Items

for future meetings Mr Hansson will continue further inquiry into safety records, Mr Brutomesso will explore methods of cost comparisons, and contact the fire chief for information on community safety. Ms Haldeman and Mr Fisher will look into developing the intangible benefits and assessing their importance. Mr Hansson will follow up with Officer Monohan and other towns on safety issues. Ms Bergen will continue to monitor School Committee discussion and gather data.

8. Citizens Comments

Mr Plummer remarked on the importance of clarity in explaining safety issues.

9. Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 9:35 by unanimous consent.

The next meeting of the CTC will be on June 7 at 7:00 PM Harvey Wheeler. The committee plans to meet at two week intervals, through June, July, and August. A date for a public hearing will be set at a time to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,
Louise S. Haldeman, Clerk