



## PLANNING & BUILDING COMMITTEE

Merrimack School District  
<http://www.isone.com/~merrpbc>

Minutes  
November 10, 2003

Present: W. Morrison, C. Morrison, F. Rothhaus, S. Heinrich, T. Koenig and School Liaison P. McGrath

Excused: K. Powell

Also Participating: Transportation Coordinator Dick Dumont, Superintendent M. Chiafery; Business Administrator M. Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent D. Woelflein, Network Administrator J. Gower and Cynthia Kaman and Bob Ralph of Laidlaw Transportation

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 PM by W. Morrison.

### **Transportation/Bussing Options**

W. Morrison told the Committee that the Transportation Committee has come to share bussing options for the new upper elementary and middle schools and get input from the Committee.

B. Ralph told the Committee that a group of people had met to discuss a series of proposals to transporting students to all schools when the new middle school opens in the fall. He said they had run some potential routes to look at time and length of the routes as well as numbers of students on each bus.

M. Shevenell told the Committee that J. Gower had used some new software to produce several scenarios that might be used. He said the group had come up with three options. Option one called for 40 buses and three bus runs, but while the middle and upper elementary schools would be bused at the same time, 20 buses would be assigned to each school. Option two called for 36 buses, three bus runs bussing the middle and high school together and separate runs for the elementary schools and the upper elementary school. Option three called to 44 buses and two bus runs – bussing the upper elementary schools with the elementary schools. He said one of the main goals was the group was to separate grades 5 and 6 from the middle school. He also noted a concern about bussing the upper elementary at a different time from Masticola elementary.

M. Chiafery told the Committee that staff prefers the second option. She noted that no one will like every option. She also said the group would be going before the School Board at its next meeting.

S. Heinrich asked why the upper elementary was proposed to start later than the elementary schools. M. Chiafery told him that they felt that the children who would potentially taking care of elementary students after school were in grade 7 and 8, not grades 5 and 6. She also indicated

there would be an afterschool program, similar to what is now provided at the elementary level for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders.

S. Heinrich asked about late runs of buses from the middle and high schools. He was told there would only be a 4:30 late bus.

S. Heinrich asked about larger buses. M. Chiafery told him that all plans use 71 passenger buses. Eighty-four student buses had been discussed, but the bus radius' made turns at some locations impossible. The group also felt that these larger buses, holding more children, might lead to more discipline problems.

S. Heinrich asked what the price differential was between using the current size buses and larger buses. M. Chiafery told him there was a \$70,000 differential. W. Morrison commented that larger buses would also lead to longer routes.

S. Heinrich asked about using 77 student buses. M. Chiafery told him these had not been discussed.

B. Ralph told the Committee that another problem with 84 student buses was that they were not commonly used and that Laidlaw would need time to order them.

C. Morrison asked if there were any benefits in using fewer, but more expensive, buses. F. Rothhaus said he thought there would be a savings in the need for fewer bus drivers.

W. Morrison asked about using larger buses on some routes. B. Ralph told him that this was not really viable or worthwhile.

T. Koenig asked for clarification of the numbers in the various proposals. He noted that the Option 2 and 3 both called for bussing grades 7 – 12 together, but option 2 used 36 buses and option 3 used 44 buses. B. Ralph explained that 44 buses were needed in order to bus the student in grades R - 6, which are bused together in option 3, so the district would use 44 buses for both runs. T. Koenig suggested that some language be added to the proposal to explain this. B. Ralph told him the figure number of buses needed based on an average of 50 per bus.

S. Heinrich asked about the times for each route. D. Dumont told him that they have driven the routes to determine how long each route takes.

F. Rothhaus asked about the possibility of having all high school students drive to school. D. Dumont stated that consistently 500-600 high school students ride the bus to school. F. Rothhaus said he thought the district could save substantial money if all high school students drove.

In response to questions regarding start times for each school, M. Chiafery told the Committee, using Option two, the high school would start at 7:39 AM, the middle school would start at 8:25 AM, the elementaries would start at 8:25 AM and the upper elementary would start at 9:05 AM.

W. Morrison suggested that the proposal information include both current and proposed new start times for the schools. He also mentioned a concern about a bottleneck at the Mastricola complex.

S. Heinrich asked for about pick-up locations at the Mastricola complex for charters. He felt that the Committee should revisit the traffic and parking issues at the Mastricola complex soon. M. Chiafery asked if the Committee had used a traffic engineer as a consultant when it devised its prior traffic recommendations. She stated she would like the Committee work with Dan DeBay, the same traffic engineer who had reviewed the traffic plans for Thorntons Ferry. She also noted that there is some money in the Pavement Capital Reserve Fund; however, she was not sure if the School Board was agents to expend from this fund.

W. Morrison suggested that, with time of the essence, the Committee should only report on proposed Mastricola renovations and present traffic suggestions at a later time.

C. Morrison brought up the firelane at the front entrances of the Mastricola schools. She asked if 28 feet was part of the town code. She said she had spoken to Chief Pepler on this issue, as well as the issue of sprinklers being included as part of any renovation proposal at the Mastricola complex. M. Chiafery suggested that any proposed re-design of the circle/parking lot at the Mastricola entrances include input from the fire department.

C. Morrison suggested a warrant article for sprinklers at the Mastricola complex and including asbestos removal in the operating budget. F. Rothhaus stated he felt that code issues were of number one priority and these included such things as asbestos removal, fire alarm strobes, sprinklers, and ADA compliance. By consensus, the Committee agreed.

T. Koenig asked if 36 buses was the total used today and if that number could be reduced due to putting grades 5 and 6 together. B. Ralph said that number could not be reduced due to the territory that had to be covered. He suggested the only way to reduce that number was to add another bus run. M. Shevenell told the Committee that the School Board goal is 48 students (or 2 per seat) on each bus and that 36 buses are needed to accomplish this. D. Dumont stated that 36 buses also provides room for each bus to pick up other students as more houses are built or people move into town. S. Heinrich noted that 36 buses are needed in order to get the students to school on time.

M. Chiafery thanked the Committee for its input and said that they would be working on the proposal to clarify some of the issues the Committee raised. She said she hoped the School Board would be able to make a decision on busing by January 1<sup>st</sup>.

The Committee took a break at 8:45 PM.

The Committee resumed at 8:55 PM.

### **Mastricola Renovation Report**

W. Morrison presented a revised draft for Committee review. By consensus, the Committee decided not to include any cost estimates in the report. The Committee felt it should defer to the

School Board as to what renovations project schedule. Members felt that estimates should only be obtained for the work the School Board decided to do and that cost estimates for other work would then be out-of-date. They further felt they did not have the expertise or the contacts to obtain cost estimates.

The Committee worked on corrections to the draft, formatting issues, eliminating some sections and prioritizing each renovation.

S. Heinrich made a motion to adjourn. Second: T. Koenig. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:39 PM.

Respectfully submitted,