

**Minutes of Open Work Session
Westover, Maryland
January 12, 2016**

TIME: 10:00 a.m. Location: J.M. Tawes Technology & Career Center

PRESENT: Board Members: Chairman Warner Sumpter, Vice Chairman Dan Kuebler, Mr. Robert Wells, Ms. Margo Green-Gale and Ms. Penny Nicholson; Superintendent, Dr. John B. Gaddis; and Deputy Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Tom Davis and Mr. Gregory Sutton, Supervisor of Transportation and Operations; and Miss Melissa Tilghman, Recording Secretary. Director of Schools, Ms. Tracie Bartemy, was excused from attending the meeting.

ABSENT FROM THE MEETING

Ms. Tracie Bartemy was excused from the meeting.

Chairman Sumpter declared a quorum and called the meeting to order.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

The Board met in in an Open Work Session to discuss and receive clarifying information regarding their concerns with Student Transportation. Several bus contractors attended the meeting and were permitted to provide input to clarify several of the Board Members concerns.

At the request of the Board, Mr. Sutton provided the Board with the following information:

1. The transportation budget for the last five years.
 - The Board expressed concern regarding the increase in expenditures over the past five years.
2. A copy of the bus contractors' manifest logs with bus routing details.
 - Mr. Sutton stated that verification of the bus contractor's manifest logs and bus routing details are ongoing. He reported that bus routes begin at the contractor's home and that daily pre and post-trip bus inspections are done by the bus contractor.
3. Yearly bus inspection process and specifications
 - Mr. Sutton reported bus inspections are conducted twice a year. Mr. Bernard Johnson, bus driver trainer/bus contractor stated that one inspection is conducted by the State and the second is conducted by a BOE staff member and a qualified mechanic. Mr. Johnson stated that repairs are done by a certified mechanic. He informed the Board that a certified shop inspection is done randomly every five years or at the request of the Motor Vehicle Department.

4. Table of Rates and Fuel Cost Sliding Scale explanation

- The Board expressed concern that due to a global decrease in fuel, bus contractors' fuel costs should reflect a decrease in fuel costs reimbursements. An attending bus contractor, assisted in the explanation of fuel cost adjustments. He informed the Board that during bus contractors' negotiations, the Board and contractors agreed that the fuel cost reimbursement would be capped at \$3.50 per gallon. If fuel prices increase beyond \$3.50 per gallon contractors will receive one cent per mile for every seven cent increase which will be added to maintenance and operation costs. This agreement was made as a safety net for the contractors and the Board should fuel prices exceed \$3.50 per gallon.

5. Per Vehicle Allotment (PVA)

- PVA are payments made to bus contractors over a fifteen year period while the bus is in service. The Board expressed concern that PVA is not adjusted to reflect depreciation of a bus. Mr. Sutton stated that the current practices are the same in Worcester and Wicomico Counties.

6. Substitute Bus Drivers

- Mr. Sutton informed the Board that there are currently 34 bus substitute drivers. He reported that all substitutes are required to undergo a background investigation, fingerprinting, submission of driver's record, possess CDL and Airbrakes License, and must receive 6-9 hours of driver training.

7. Edulog Update

- Mr. Sutton reported that Edulog has assisted in the elimination of the Intermediate School students having to be shuttled from one school before taking another bus to arrive at their home school. He stated that the implementation of the Edulog Software is an ongoing process and once current student data has been submitted into PowerSchool, PowerSchool and Edulog will interface, allowing the real time calculation of bus mileages. Mr. Sutton also reported that if Edulog develops a bus stop that does not seem safe, he will be able to manually override the stop. Mr. Sutton informed the Board that all the bus runs for the local geographical areas have been entered into Edulog.

The Board expressed concern that they are not confident in the Edulog Software Program and that implementing the software seems to be very cumbersome.

Superintendent and Board Member Comments

➤ Dr. Gaddis reported that:

- The issues found through the Legislative Audit have been addressed and the audits are pushing school systems to revamp transportation. He reported that the State has expressed concern that Somerset County Public Schools should address transportation expenditures.

- In response to Board Member Wells questioning the status of the requirement to install seatbelts on school buses, Dr. Gaddis reported that the installation of school bus seatbelts was still a topic at the State Level and if approved, would be an unfunded mandate.
- Dr. Gaddis stated that the legislative audits are pushing school systems to revamp transportation. The Board has a fiduciary responsibility to evaluate the reliability of Edu-log. System should not be dependent on a particular software system.
- Vice Chairman Kuebler made the following requests and comments:
 - He expressed concern regarding the 12 month Edulog implementation delay and requested an Edulog implementation timeline.
 - Mr. Sutton responded that unforeseen glitches and kinks within the software has caused a delay in the software's implementation.
 - Requested a list of the transportation software used in surrounding counties
 - Requested that a certified technician be hired to assist in the bus inspections
 - Requested that Mr. Sutton address the concerns of bus contractors
 - Requested that Maryland driver checks are completed before a bus substitute is hired
 - He requested the rationale behind a bus substitute going through the bus contractor instead of contacting a staff member at the Board if student transportation issues arise.
 - Mr. Sutton stated that since the substitute is employed by the contractor, the contractor should be notified before contacting the Central Office.
- Chairman Sumpter stated that the Board requested the implementation of software and that the State Board is doing an Adequacy Study to determine student routing efficiency. He reported that bus runs are determined by the geographical area of where the bus driver lives. He commended the bus drivers for their professionalism exhibited when transporting SCPS students to and from school and school events.
- Board Member Nicholson thanked the bus contractors for all they do for the students of SCPS.
- Board Member Green-Gale requested a copy of the school bus contractors substitute list. She stated that bus contractors are an important asset to the Somerset County Public School System and that the contractors are doing a fabulous job.
- Board Members Wells thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

After a lengthy discussion of the Board's student transportation concerns, the Board concluded that additional information was needed to assure them that the transportation department was running effectively and efficiently.

ADJOURNMENT

On the motion of Vice Chairman Kuebler and a second by Board Member Wells, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at **12:08 p.m.**

Dr. John B. Gaddis, Superintendent

Recorded and Prepared by: Melissa Tilghman/Recording Secretary