

GREENFIELD SCHOOLS

POLICY AND PROGRAM SUBCOMMITTEE

Minutes, Meeting of July 18, 2017

Present: Subcommittee members S.Hollins, Chair (SH), D. Alexander (DA), and remotely Mayor Martin (WM). Also present, Principal Nancy Putnam; Press. . Immediately prior to today's meeting Superintendent Harper and the Transportation Coordinator conveyed they were unable to attend.

1. Call to Order at 9:00 a.m.
There was no request to take any particular policy out of order from the agenda.
2. Tracking. Reviewed policy activity for sections B, D, A, F, and J. Chair will go through prior minutes, particularly to clarify Facility policy discussions.
3. Policy EEAA Walkers and Riders

The majority of meeting time was dedicated to reaching closure on a recommendation for Policy EEAA.

Policy and statutory details were reviewed. SH mentioned how different issues are being conflated (combined and mixed up) which is making the policy discussion confused, particularly the issue of transportation reimbursement and distance eligibility.

The goal of district transportation is in policy EEA – “to help students get to and from school” and to organize transportation in “an efficient, safe, and economical manner.” How can the school committee know that walking routes are safe if they have not yet been reviewed? The overarching goal is helping students get to school.

On the topic of switching from a distance from home to school (current policy) to a distance based on walkable pathways (recommended), would this be confusing and, then, economical (in terms of personnel time)? How would GPS handle figuring out walkable distances for every parent and would parents want to discuss this individually, e.g. “we don't use that route because of barking dogs or no street lights?” There is concern about creating a policy that superimposes more work. That wouldn't be efficient in terms of staff time. And what would happen when the computer system that figures out walkable routes goes down? GPS doesn't have the staff for this. It could also be confusing to explain. This does not limit the superintendent, however, in using walkable distance when considering routes.

No one at the meeting supports a policy change to use “walkable pathway distance” for transportation eligibility.

SH mentions that the transportation reimbursement issue is also confusing, with the law mentioning 2.0 miles in one section and 1.5 mile distance from home to school in another section. Need to look at this more closely but the basic GPS EEA policy is not written to only provide transportation when there is state reimbursement. EEA was reviewed again for purpose of providing school transportation.

There is discussion of EEA's statement that school transportation will be "a combination of contracted and locally provided services." SH mentioned this is not accurate since today's review of statutes allows for parent-reimbursed transportation; some GPS examples are in place. If the mayor's interest in public transportation comes to be, this doesn't fit into policy EEA. There is support to amend the EEA statement to include "any other options" and not only district-provided transportation.

MW provided information about his public transportation vision: "option of providing bus passes could be purchased at a discount." One goal would be providing choices. The city-public transportation discussion has been ongoing for six months. MW's vision is for shadow routes. Contact is Michael Perrault and also Mark Smith. Hoping to have this in place for September. Passes would be good all day. Discussion about safety of elementary children on public buses.

On the topic of how far a student should walk at 6:30 a.m. in the cold winter, MW is fine with a 12-15 min. walk. SH is fine with a 15-20 min walk as long as it is safe and not too cold to be outside. DA, also. Discussion of how long it takes to walk one mile—the guess was approx. 20-22 minutes.

Changes to both EEA and EEAA were discussed.

For EEAA Walkers and Riders, check Paragraph 2 at (a) –Is reimbursement at 1.5 miles? Clarify MGL 74, 8A. Add "d) when state places child" and "e) other allowable situations such as special education transportation."

Distance recommendation for transportation policy EEAA Walkers and Riders is 1.0 mile from school to residence for elementary schools. The reason is impact on congestion at school buildings.

Distance recommendation for transportation policy EEAA is recommended at 1.5 miles for middle and high schools. Decision is be clear in policy, e.g. not have a 2.0 guideline that has never been followed. Superintendent has flexibility to make routes. Discussion: how to add that the district will determine when additional transportation is necessary to comply with safety concerns of policy EEA, the age of students, and individual road features?

Suggest adding a paragraph to EEAA before last paragraph of EEAA:

"Annually, transportation routes will be developed by the Superintendent taking into consideration Massachusetts law, school committee policy, walkable routes, public and parent transportation options, weather, age of students, and safety."

4. Policy GCG: Part-time and Substitute Staff Employment

No changes recommended except adding a sentence: "The current substitute pay schedule will be added to the policy manual as an exhibit: GCG-E."
Recommend first reading at August meeting.

5. Policy Recommendations for School Committee meeting.
Chair will forward recommendations. Prior recommendation are in minutes.

6. Adjournment: 11:30 a.m.

[For purposes of following the discussion, statutory sections and policies discussed are copied into these minutes].

MGL 71: 68:

If the distance between a child's residence and the school he is entitled to attend exceeds two miles and the nearest school bus stop is more than one mile from such residence, and the school committee declines to furnish transportation, the department, upon appeal of the parent or guardian of the child, may require the town to furnish transportation for children in grades kindergarten through six for a part or for all of the distance between said child's residence and the school.

MGL 71B: 8

A school committee may adopt a program to reimburse parents who voluntarily choose to transport their disabled child to a school approved by the department that is located outside of the city or town of residence of the parent or guardian.

State Transportation Reimbursement (excerpt from state guidelines)

The following pupil transportation scheduling and routing examples are subject to state reimbursement and should be reviewed for safe, efficient and economical school transportation planning.

I. ***Student is transported to school or regional school district of attendance.***

Distance from residence to school or regional school district of attendance in excess of one and one-half miles in one direction and return is reimbursable under the provisions of Chapter 71, Sections 7A, 7B, 16C or Chapter 71A, Section 8.

Two policies discussed are attached for reference.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES (revised 2011)

The major purpose of the school system's transportation services is to aid students in getting to and from school in an **efficient, safe, and economical manner**.

The Greenfield School System's student transportation program will be a combination of contracted and locally provided services. The School Committee will award contracts on a competitive bid basis.

Bus, van or taxi contractors will be held responsible for the operation of school transportation vehicles. Providers of transportation will comply with all applicable state laws and regulations, including but not limited to:

1. Specifications for school bus design and equipment
2. Inspection of buses
3. Qualifications and examinations of bus drivers
4. Driving regulations
5. Small vehicle requirements, if applicable
6. Insurance coverage
7. Adherence to local regulations and directives as specified in bid contracts and school district policy.

The Superintendent, working with the bus contractor and other appropriate administrators, will be responsible for establishing bus schedules, routes, stops, and all other matters relative to the transportation program.

SOURCE: MASC LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 40:5; 71:7A, B and C; 71:37D; 71:48A; 71:68; 71:71A; 71B:4; 71B:5; 71B:8; 74:8A; 76:1; 76:12Bi; 76:14 CROSS REF.: EEAA, Walkers and Riders Parent/Student Handbook

Policy EEAA Walkers and Riders

Students will be entitled to transportation to and from school at the expense of the public schools when such transportation conforms to applicable provisions of the Massachusetts General Laws.

Reimbursement to the school system for transportation costs is given by the Commonwealth only for (a) students living at least one and one half miles from school, (b) students who live more than one mile from the nearest bus stop, and (c) students with special needs for whom transportation must be provided.

Additionally, the Committee will provide transportation for students as follows:

Kindergarten – Grade 6: Students living more than one and one-half miles from school.

Grades 7 -12: Students living more than two miles from school.

Exceptions to these guidelines may be made at the discretion of the Superintendent. This will apply particularly to any student who must travel in a hazardous area to and from school. These students will be transported regardless of the mileage limits listed.

**SOURCE: MASC LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 40:5; 71:7A; 71:68; 71B:5 CROSS REF.:
EEA, Student Transportation Services**