

GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
HEALTH, SAFETY, & FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES: March 5, 2019

Greenfield Public Schools Central Office, 195 Federal Street, Greenfield, MA 01301

Present: Katie Caron (KC), Chair; Susan Hollins (SH); Cameron Ward (CW)

Absent: None

Also present: Robert Haigh, Greenfield Police Chief; Jordana Harper, Superintendent; William Martin, Mayor and School Committee Member; Omar Mejia, Safe Routes To School; Steve Nembirkow, Business Manager; Chief Robert Strahan, Greenfield Fire Chief; Ed Voudren, Transportation Coordinator

I. Call to Order

With a quorum present (KC, SH, CW), KC opened the meeting.

II. Public Comment

Omar Mejia, Safe Routes To School (SRTS) Central Coordinator, presented on its current and upcoming programs and offerings, including:

- Webinars and annual poster sign contest for idling vehicles
- Pedestrian and bike safety training and bike rodeo
- Infrastructure grants, which require an assessment of the school(s) prior to applying. Coordinator Mejia will check on whether or not GPS has an updated assessment. Town would need to be co-applicant.

III. Discussion of Emergency Shelter

It has been suggested in the past by various citizens that schools be used as homeless shelters during especially frigid evenings. Chiefs Haigh and Strahan recommend finding alternative means for homeless shelters, such as through faith-based organizations, the Salvation Army, and the current shelter in town, as it is not feasible to use schools as overnight shelters if school is in session the following morning.

- During an isolated emergency event affecting all Greenfield residents, schools may be used as shelters
- Greenfield Middle School is an approved Red Cross emergency shelter

IV. SRO MOU Review of New Recommended Language

Chief Haigh explained his take on the new SRO MOU language recommended by the AG's office. GPS' MOU and AG's office MOU significantly different.

- GPS' SRO is also GPS' truancy officer
- AG's office language virtually eliminates an SRO's ability to do anything that would normally be under a police officer's purview, making having SROs in GPS ineffective
- Chief Haigh will ask for District Attorney Sullivan's formal opinion on adopting the new language. Depending upon opinion received, School Committee may choose to acknowledge it is going to continue to use the current MOU (signature pages originate from DA's office)

V. Bus Routes

Members discussed feasibility of the proposal to eliminate two bus routes in light of upcoming budget vote (transportation is an area in which savings may be realized). Superintendent Harper walked the group through a slideshow of photos highlighting one walking route children would take if the bus were to be cut from the budget.

Superintendent Harper acknowledged that such a proposed change would require many safety considerations to make it doable from a safety perspective; some parents have expressed their concerns.

Obstacles to walking one route to Newton School, for example, include:

- Blocked and/or unshoveled sidewalks; groups would be unable to pass together
- High snow piles, creating barriers to visibility
- Busy intersections (route used as pass-through for much of Greenfield traffic)
- In some areas, would require walking in the road
- Varying weather conditions; students may not have proper attire in which to walk to school

A minimum of five additional crossing guards would need to be hired if bus routes are cut.

Ideas to alleviate some of the obstacles/issues, if routes were to be cut:

- Reintroduce the “Walking School Bus” concept
- Have children dropped off at a “safe spot” and walk the rest of the way
- Train/retrain the children on how to walk to school safely
- Possibly utilize upcoming Complete Streets funds to repair some of the roads/sidewalks

SH: though GPS is within its rights to have students walk these routes (because students live within a 1.5 mile radius of the school(s)), state guidelines do state that local conditions should also be considered.

KC: a recommendation to full School Committee not needed, as this, and other, budget items will be discussed in the following days with full School Committee. Consensus seems to be it would be unfavorable to eliminate these routes due to issues discussed above.

VI. Adjournment

KC closed the meeting meeting at 2:09 p.m.

Meeting Documents

1. FY20 Health & Safety Committee Safety Impact of Bus Cuts Slideshow
2. Policies related to bus routes