



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LEE COUNTY

Finance Advisory Committee

November 16, 2011

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present: Bill Genter, Rick Hart, Cathleen Morgan, Tamisen Traiger, Daniel Therrien

Committee Members Absent: Nicholas Alexander, Frank Bove, Thomas Busatta, BJ Brundage, Patrick Darga, David Deetscreek, Charles Massie, Susanne Quattro, Chuck Reynolds

Lee County School Personnel Present: Dr. Alberto Rodriguez, Dr. Ami Desamours, Mr. Robert Morgan

Board Members Present: Dr. Jane Kuckel

Recording Secretary: Sarah Cox

Welcome

Cathleen Morgan called the meeting to order at 4:37p.m. She reviewed the agenda and introduced Dr. Alberto Rodriguez, Chief Administrative Officer, who will help generate topics for the Committee to discuss at future meetings.

Approval of Minutes (October 26, 2011)

Cathleen called for approval of the minutes; motioned by Rick Hart, second by Daniel Therrien, and passed unanimously.

Public Comment

n/a

Transportation

Cathleen provided a handout that she prepared outlining principal findings and recommendations from the Transpar Study. Robert Morgan, Director of Transportation, responded to the document highlighting the following points.

- Closing of the Estero maintenance facility to save costs.
- Costs have declined each year in Transportation since 2007/2008.
- The cost per student is consistent with the state, despite the Transpar Study saying it is 3% higher. Other Districts do not account for the cost of field trips and other miscellaneous items in their Transportation budget which makes their cost per student seem lower.
- Transportation arrangements have been made for 57,000 eligible students this school year.
- Proposed changes to morning bell times.

Approved December 14, 2011

- Consideration of replicating programs to save transportation costs; are evaluating the cost of replicating program vs. transporting students to a school across the county.
- More efficient management systems. The financial management system in place during the Transpar Study was later replaced with PeopleSoft which is more effective. There is also an expert in the Transportation Department on PeopleSoft.
- Courtesy bus ridership and zero rider stops. Lengthy discussion took place. Mr. Morgan highlighted the complexity of changing bus stops and the scrutiny that comes from the community and media when doing so.
- The uncontrollable cost of fuel. In one school year, District busses drive thirteen million miles. For each penny that diesel rises per gallon, it equates to a \$25,000 impact on the District.
- Overtime. The Board approved four new positions to be created in the Transportation Department which has helped to reduce the need for over time. However, with the tiered bell times, the need for overtime will always be there.
- Discussed the process and debate of school choice. Dr. Kuckel explained a few benefits of school choice.
 1. Guaranteed attendance. A student and their siblings will be guaranteed a spot in the school of choice throughout the school level (i.e. K-5, 6-8, and 9-12).
 2. Attractor programs.
 3. The balance that it provides socioeconomically.

Mr. Morgan stated while school choice does add complexity, the District is trying to narrow the zones, which will present a cost savings.

Mr. Morgan opened the table for any questions. Cathleen asked if the District has considered eco-busses. Mr. Morgan responded that Manatee County purchased two at \$295,000 each; this does not include maintenance and repair costs. The average cost of a standard bus is \$118,000 and that includes GPS, cameras, radio and more. Mr. Morgan added that emissions generated from a standard school bus are very low. Next year, with the new version of busses coming out, they will get 2.5 miles more per gallon. Cathleen also questioned if Wi-Fi has been considered on busses so students could do their homework or study, particularly if they have a long ride. Mr. Morgan responded that until the cost goes down, this has not been considered. The GPS systems currently on busses are not cellular. He noted that only 300 students have a bus ride over 1.5 hours and this was chosen and approved by the parent. Mr. Therrien asked why there are seven configurations of busses. Mr. Morgan noted the seven configurations; 29, 47, 64, 65, 72, 77, and 84 passenger. These are the configurations that are currently on inventory. Why so many configurations were purchased, he could not explain because these decisions were made before his time. As the District goes through the bus replacement cycle, eventually there will only be two configurations; 47 passenger for ESE and 77 passenger for conventional.

Mr. Therrien asked what the cost to transport an ESE student is. Mr. Morgan explained that it is considerably high. Dr. Rodriguez added that it is the District's moral responsibility to provide transportation for these students. Discussion

Approved December 14, 2011

ensued regarding ESE clusters. Dr. Rodriguez provided an example; all hearing impaired students go to Allen Park Elementary, no matter where they are located in the County; and all visually impaired students go to Colonial Elementary. After elementary, both groups then go to Fort Myers Middle and Fort Myers High. The District is looking at the cost of transporting the students versus replicating the programs. It seems the benefit of replicating the programs would equal more federal dollars and less dollars being spent in the general fund for transportation.

Dr. Rodriguez commended Robert Morgan for all his efforts within the Transportation area.

Dr. Rodriguez took the floor to discuss areas the District is looking into to improve efficiency.

1. The savings associated with dropping students off to school earlier.
2. The topic of proximity preference within School Choice; will be discussed at the December 6, 2011 Board Briefing.
3. Cell phones in the District. This topic will be briefed to the Board at a later date. Extensive work has been performed in this area to get all District cell phones on the e-rate (which provides a 90% reimbursement). This will lead to better quality phones and allow more staff to have them, such as Principals, Assistant Principals, and Building Supervisors.
4. Re-examination of federal funds.
5. Utility savings. Approximately two-thirds of all schools have equipment in place that leads to utility savings, such as motion-sensor lights. The District is planning to have an independent auditor evaluate the cost savings. Also, consideration of providing incentives to schools for utility savings. The Board recently adopted a policy regarding utility savings. The target is to reduce consumption by ten percent. For schools who do this, they could receive up to fifty percent of the savings back in their budget.
6. Costs of athletics/band programs. A thorough analysis on this topic has been performed and will be discussed at the December 6, 2011 Board Briefing.
7. Quality of cafeteria tables. Inspections are ongoing. The funds to replace the tables are earmarked by surplus funds in the Food Service fund.

Dr. Rodriguez reminded the Committee of the District's primary focus – providing quality education in a safe environment. The District's business is education and it is the District's responsibility to ensure this focus is of the utmost importance.

Board Member's Report

N/A (ran out of time)

FY12 Budget Update

N/A (ran out of time)

Good of the Order

Cathleen summarized the discussion. She had provided another document to the Committee, which will be discussed at the next meeting. She reminded everyone

Approved December 14, 2011

that Joe Donzelli, Director of Communications, will be present at the next meeting as well to discuss public relations.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:58p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 14, 2011 at 4:30 p.m., in the HR Community Training Room located at 2855 Colonial Boulevard, Fort Myers, Florida.