

**BETHLEHEM AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD FACILITIES COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2008**

Mrs. Michele Cann, Facilities Chairperson of the Board of School Directors, called the meeting of the Board Facilities Committee to order at 6:02 p.m. on Monday, September 8, 2008, in the Dining Room of the Education Center. Present were School Board members Benjamin Tenaglia, Charlene Koch, Loretta Leeson, Michele Cann, Irene Follweiler, Rosario Amato, Judith Dexter, and Eugene McKeon. Also present were Dr. Joseph A. Lewis, superintendent of schools; Scott T. Gilliland, director of facilities and operations; Arif Fazil, Jim Hanna, and Michael Spadafora, district engineers (D'Huy Engineering, Inc.); Thomas Washington, assistant superintendent for human resources; Stanley Majewski, assistant to the superintendent for finance and administration; Dr. Dean Donaher, director of student services; Mary Katona, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction; David Himmelberger, supervisor of transportation; JoAnn Durante, principal of Liberty High School; Michael LaPorta, principal of Freedom High School; Richard Agretto, director of special education; Frederick Harris, Freedom High School athletic director; Samuel Senneca, Liberty High School athletic director; and representatives from the press.

The following items were discussed:

CONSTRUCTION UPDATES –

Dr. Lewis showed the board a PowerPoint presentation of the status of the Liberty High School and Broughal Middle School building projects. Liberty's pictures showcased the band room, choral room, Student Activity corridor and outside entrances, natatorium, auxiliary gym, library, and the fitness area. He noted that in a recent visit to Liberty, he found the finished areas of the building spotless, and the classrooms functioning as intended. Broughal's pictures showed aerial views of the building's progress as well as the auditorium, retaining wall, greenhouse space, interior and exterior brick, skylights, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, and reflective roofing. Dr. Lewis told the board that once the building is at a "safe level," a tour will be conducted for them. He also said that the Broughal project is on schedule if not slightly ahead.

Mrs. Leeson said that the Liberty High School project has been a long and difficult project for the district. She has been told that parking remains an issue and that there is not enough parking for all staff.

Mrs. Durante agreed that the parking is limited; however, there is parking available off campus. There is also parking available along the Lab Center side of the building.

Dr. Lewis said that the parking area along side the Lab center is to eventually be restored to grass. He agreed that parking is a dilemma at the school, but the board has rejected numerous motions to resolve parking issues due to budget constraints.

Mr. Fazil added that he frequently finds the Lafayette parking lot, Grenadier Boulevard street parking, and student parking lot near empty. Those lots can also be used for staff and public parking.

Mrs. Durante said that currently the hall monitors are assigned to parking in the Lafayette lot. The food service staff has also complained about the scarce parking, but this situation has been rectified.

Mrs. Leeson suggested that signage be posted inside of Liberty High School to help students, staff, and visitors find their way through the building.

Dr. Lewis said that signage can be posted in the building. Floor plans will be provided to the high school administration to develop a plan that can be reviewed and then implemented.

DISCUSSION ITEMS –

Mr. Gilliland reviewed item two on the agenda, Summer Maintenance Updates. He said that there have been roof replacements done at various schools as well as fire alarm systems replaced at Thomas Jefferson and William Penn Elementary Schools. The Maintenance department's efforts were consumed with all of the building moves this summer. He said that his department also hosted a life skills summer work program which was very successful. There were numerous inspections that took place over the summer, such as fire extinguisher testing and water pump testing.

Mrs. Koch asked what the report meant by welding buses. Was this major or minor work that was being done?

Mr. Gilliland said that every year as the Transportation department readies the buses for state inspection our district welder assists them in welding small cracks before the inspections take place.

Mrs. Koch asked if an inventory of the age of buses was still kept, and if they were still replaced in the order of oldest vehicles first.

Mr. Gilliland said that yes, a list is kept.

Mr. Gilliland also informed the board that there have recently been some problems with the fire alarm system at Spring Garden Elementary School. The problems caused the fire company to be dispatched. Simplex was called to diagnose the problem. The system at the school was installed in 1992 and recently passed inspection, however, the peripheral devices are older technology and it is difficult to have them communicate with the panel. Simplex said it would be approximately \$3,877 to upgrade the software for the system. This would be a less costly option than replacing the entire system; the detectors could be replaced as needed.

Mrs. Follweiler asked Mr. Gilliland if he was recommending this as an agenda item. Would it be a one time cost? Are there other schools that are also in need of this type of upgrade?

Mr. Gilliland answered that he will be recommending this as an agenda item after it is reviewed by Cabinet. He noted that the system has to comply with current codes. Upgrading will keep us code compliant versus tearing the system out completely for replacement.

Mr. Amato asked if the schools were out of code.

Mr. Gilliland said that all buildings recently had their annual inspection and passed. There are a number of schools that are at the end of their life cycle as far as their systems go. It will be necessary to replace these systems as they fail because the replacement parts are no longer made.

Mr. Amato asked if there is money in this year's budget to cover the upgrade at Spring Garden Elementary.

Mr. Gilliland indicated that there was money in the budget to cover this expense.

Dr. Lewis reviewed agenda item A, Halloween Parade. Participating in this parade has been a tradition for the district, but if the board did not approve, the district would understand and would also do as they directed.

Mr. Amato asked if the amount requested for the parade was included in the budget.

Mr. Himmelberger answered that yes, it was.

Mrs. Leeson stated it was in the field trip budget. Would approving this amount impact other trips?

Dr. Lewis said the district is selecting required trips by grade. They are currently in the process of identifying required trips. This is one of many requested trips on the list. The rest will be adjusted.

Mr. Amato suggested approving the trip as it is money that has already been allocated out of the budget.

Mrs. Leeson said approving this trip will impact others. The field trips were not reviewed by the dollar amount of each individual trip, but rather as one lump sum. That sum was reduced with the budget cuts. There is a general dollar amount in the budget for field trips. The money is not assigned to any trip in particular.

Dr. Lewis noted the amount was figured by the historic analysis of field trips. The district can no longer support all trips. The Halloween parade involves not just one school or band, but five to six.

Mrs. Cann thanked Dr. Lewis for bringing that to the board's attention. She stated that participating in the parade was also a service to the community.

Mr. Tenaglia asked why the object/detail codes that the board requested be listed on agenda items were not listed. It was concluded that these codes were not listed on the original packets that were mailed out to the board. After review of the updated packet, Mr. Tenaglia said that he was not interested in the account code (this was the code listed on the agenda item) but rather in the object detail code in the same format that it was presented to the board in budget presentation documents.

After consulting with Mr. Majewski, Dr. Lewis stated that it was a misunderstanding and from now on, the agenda items would be listed with the cabinet and detail codes so the board would be able to review the specific line item of the budget.

Mr. Majewski asked Mr. Tenaglia for a specific example of what he wanted to see on the agenda items.

Dr. Lewis said that information will be provided in lieu of what was provided for tonight's meeting.

Mrs. Cann reviewed agenda item B, Transportation Schedule for the 2008-2009 School Year.

Mr. Himmelberger explained that this item was submitted as it is a required item by the State of Pennsylvania to provide transportation for public and non-public schools. This item will appear annually on the agenda for their approval.

Dr. Lewis added that by approving this item, it allows the transportation department to continue to provide transportation for the district.

Mrs. Leeson asked if the district's transportation department has engaged in any discussion with the public transportation system to try to combine runs.

Mr. Himmelberger said that over the past few years, he has requested a schedule from LANTA but has not yet been provided with one.

Mr. Tenaglia asked Mr. Himmelberger if the inquiry he received from Hanover Township on the location of the bus stops was looked into.

Mr. Himmelberger said that they were looking at Crawford Drive. All other buses go into surrounding developments. Crawford Drive is a busy street, but people driving are still stopping for the bus. He thinks it would create a problem to move the bus stops off of Crawford and onto the secondary roads.

Mrs. Dexter asked if a run has been devised that gets all students to school on time.

Mr. Himmelberger said yes, there has been. The Allentown run is difficult, but he is pleased with the process of the district's transportation department.

Mrs. Dexter asked what the longest travel time is for a student who rides the bus.

Mr. Himmelberger said the students who ride from the Palmer line to Allentown schools and also the Swain School are the longest. These students are on the bus for approximately one and a half hours a day.

Mrs. Koch asked if the problem of tardiness of students that live on the south side of Bethlehem and ride the city bus to Liberty High School has been resolved.

Mr. Himmelberger said that yes, it has been resolved. This year ridership for the district is up and the high school loads are heavy. The transportation department is currently working on resolving this problem as well.

Mrs. Koch asked since we know we have scheduling issues with buses, are the schools being notified of the student's tardiness?

Mr. Himmelberger again answered yes. The teachers, hall monitors, and office staff are notified of any of the buses late arrivals.

Mr. Gilliland reminded the board that the first few days of school are difficult as far as bus scheduling is concerned. There have only been a few minor problems regarding busing.

Mr. Gilliland reviewed agenda item C, Authorization to Expend 2005 and 2007 Bond Funds – Library Move – Liberty High School Additions and Renovations Construction Project. He explained how the library was moved and said that this agenda item represents the costs from that move.

Mr. Tenaglia stated that the money did not exist to pay these fees as the district has surpassed the amount borrowed for the projects.

Dr. Lewis said that there was a specified amount of money set aside to relocate the library. There is not any additional money for extra projects or expenses. The requirements of the project were identified and this was one of them.

Mr. Majewski said that the district does not own the proper equipment to move a library. This move was anticipated and figured in the costs from the beginning.

Dr. Lewis further stated that the district has not gone beyond the normal percentage of change orders.

Mr. Fazil agreed that the projects are on budget. When the Liberty, Freedom, and Broughal projects were approved back in 2003, the district knew they would have to go back and borrow

additional money once all the costs were known after bid. The exact dollar figure for the projects was not known at the time the money was originally borrowed. In addition, there were significant delays in starting the Broughal project due to location and scope changes that were made to the project.

Mrs. Leeson said that the district knew that it had three projects in line to be completed. It was estimated what we would need to complete these projects, however, items were added knowing that the financing would not cover the additional expenses such as the \$2 million parking garage at Broughal Middle School.

Mr. Tenaglia asked if the money borrowed included the amount needed for the demolition of the old Northeast Middle School.

Mr. Majewski answered that no, it did not. In 2009, the district will need to obtain additional financing to complete the current projects. Currently, there is approximately \$25 million remaining in the bond fund.

Mrs. Leeson asked if the financing would also cover the old Broughal Middle School demolition. It was indicated that this cost was included in the Broughal project.

Dr. Lewis reminded the board that they chose these three projects. Liberty High School came in a higher amount than anticipated because of rising construction costs as well as inflation. The Broughal Middle School parking garage was also approved by the board at a cost of approximately \$2 million. The district did not want to borrow any more money than what was needed at the time.

Mr. Majewski said that borrowing only what was needed avoided the cost of paying interest on money that was not going to be used right away.

Dr. Donaher reviewed item four on the agenda, Athletic Transportation and Registration Fee Discussion. He stated that the district was considering eliminating the transportation of students to all home Bethlehem Area School District athletic events. Over the past three years, the band was transported as a temporary solution to the ongoing construction project at Liberty High School. The district would simply be converting back to way it was before the construction started.

Mrs. Follweiler asked if the cheerleaders have been transported in the past.

Mr. Harris answered, yes, up until this year. The band, cheerleaders, and all other sports with the exception of football would no longer be transported to home games. Football players will continue to be transported as there is a lack of dressing areas (locker rooms) for them. There are currently seventy-six players on the team and locker room only holds sixty players.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR TO VISITORS –

The board extended the courtesy of the floor to hear all of the public input regarding agenda item 4, Athletic Transportation and Registration Fee Discussion. The following people addressed the committee with comments:

Victoria Edwards, 4070 Hunter Court, Bethlehem
Joann Kelly, 3510 Summit Court, Bethlehem
Lisa Piccioni, 4 Harding Court, Bethlehem
Edwin Sterner, 2411 Farmersville Road, Bethlehem
Regina Bryson, 3446 Chipman Road, Bethlehem
Silvio Coccia, 1522 Sculac Road, Bethlehem
Fred Harris, 1444 Main Street, Bethlehem
Kathy Perrio, no address given

All of the above public speakers opposed eliminating transportation to athletic events. They stated that it was a matter of safety and security for hundreds of students. They said there was not enough security in and around the school. Many of the speakers talked about the altercation that took place just outside Liberty High School's stadium on Friday, September 5, 2008. Concern was also expressed over the lack of parking around Liberty High School.

Stephen Antalics, 737 Ridge Street, Bethlehem: Mr. Antalics said that sports were optional and not required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. What was the mission of the school district? It was up to the district to decide this; he wanted to know what the priorities of the district were. Do you cut educational programs or do you cut transportation to athletic events?

Dr. Lewis reminded all present that the students from Liberty High School are not bused to athletic events. It is a misconception that these students are able to walk to the school as many of them do not live in the immediate area surrounding the school. Many live in west and south Bethlehem. No one has worked harder on trying to equalize the situations between the two high schools than the district. The anticipated savings by cutting transportation to athletic events to any home Bethlehem Area School District contests would be approximately \$19,000. Dr. Lewis continued to say that they [district] knew about the altercation at the stadium. A meeting was going to be conducted with the high school principals, high school athletic directors, and local police departments regarding security at the stadium. He said he understands the speakers' requests and the concerns stated.

Mr. McKeon said this decision would also affect other sports such as basketball, baseball, and track and field.

Mr. Amato suggested having both Liberty and Freedom High School students park at Freedom and be bused to these events as parking is an issue at Liberty.

Mrs. Edwards suggested going back to the community to raise the money needed to transport the students to home games.

Dr. Lewis said that he appreciated the thoughts about raising money for busing. The district will be tightening security at the stadium. He would also appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter with the principals, athletic directors, and local police departments. All kids deserve the right to be safe and secure.

Mrs. Dexter said that she encourages the district to explore and discuss the options. She also suggested inviting the band directors to the meeting. She said that the budget is acceptable, but not perfect. The district's high schools have so many programs. The budget cuts affect all programs and have also an impact on the people on the community. No one was spared in the cuts. Mrs. Dexter said that the board does try to prioritize, and they are making choices that will affect all programs, security, and athletics. To her, the highest priority is to restore the reading program. We cannot afford all items and cannot participate in everything.

Mrs. Follweiler agreed that this issue was about safety of the students. She suggested having only daytime games at the stadium. This would also save the district money by not having to turn on the lights.

Dr. Lewis said that it was a possibility, but the stadium's schedule is difficult as it is constantly being used.

Dr. Donaher then explained the registration fees for athletic events. In the budget, \$13,250 has been allocated for these fees. He then explained the fees for the upcoming Virginia Duals wrestling tournament.

Mrs. Leeson asked Dr. Donaher if he was recommending if these fees should be approved.

Mr. Amato said that if these fees were already budgeted, we should fund them.

Mrs. Leeson questioned why this area was not cut.

Dr. Lewis said that athletics was asked to cut a certain amount from their budget and they were able to do that without taking money from the registration fees item. They kept this amount because they valued these tournaments for the students of the district. For future direction, may we bring these items [registration fees] before the board for recommendation?

Mr. McKeon said that asking these clubs to raise the money for registration fees now would be difficult.

Mrs. Follweiler said that this item was previously tabled for discussion.

Mr. Amato stated that if we have this money in the approved budget, then we should pay it. We have told these clubs that the money is there and it would not be fair to cut it now.

Mrs. Dexter said the Virginia Duals tournament requires some days out of school. It was tabled as there were new field trip costs and requirements.

Mrs. Cann said that that she would like to this item appear on the agenda with that information.

Mr. Washington reviewed item 5 on the agenda, Strategic Plan Update. He requested any additions or deletions be forwarded to him so he may return them to the correct chairperson of the subcommittee.

Mrs. Leeson asked if the continuing one-to-one laptop initiative was going to be done. What are the costs going to be? Are we addressing safety in the Strategic Plan? Curriculum and instruction also needs to be reviewed for the high end and middle students, not just the low end students.

Mr. Washington asked the board to forward all questions to him in writing so he would have time to review them and provide answers at the next meeting.

Bob Kistler, 513 East Laurel Street, Bethlehem: Mr. Kistler wanted to know if the Virginia Duals tournament was going to be funded as the participants have already paid \$3,500 in anticipation of attending this event.

Dr. Lewis said that he would like to see this item as a recommendation on the agenda for the September 22, 2008, Regular Board Meeting. The board can then vote and make a decision.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE SEPTEMBER 22, 2008, REGULAR BOARD MEETING –

After discussion, the board committee agreed to bring the following agenda items to the September 22, 2008, Regular Board Meeting:

- A. Halloween Parade
- B. Transportation Schedule for the 2008-2009 School Year
- C. Authorization to Expend 2005 and 2007 Bond Funds – Library Move – Liberty High School Additions and Renovations Construction Project

OPEN FORUM –

Mr. Amato said he has been approached about the condition of the tennis courts at Liberty High School. The four courts located at the school have not been updated or recoated in a number of years. He was told about issues with the steps and drainage of the courts. He said there was money allocated in the project to fix the courts. Why has this not been done?

Mr. Fazil said the steps were corrected at no cost to the district. The drainage issue is being corrected now as the catch basin is being rebuilt. Recoating the courts is not part of the project. The tennis court recoating project was postponed due to construction. It is on the capital list for review in October. If a heavy storm passes like the one on Saturday, there will be drainage issues until all the work is completed and the area is stabilized.

Mr. Amato asked Mr. Fazil if the water and dirt on the courts was fixed for the time being. Once Liberty is completed, will the problem be fixed?

Mr. Fazil said yes it would.

Mr. McKeon said that he attended a volleyball tournament over the Labor Day weekend at Freedom High School. He noticed the competing teams were using portable volleyball nets. Why were they not using the nets that drop down from the ceiling?

Mr. Harris said that when the nets were installed, the district was not told that referee standards could not be used with that brand. The nets in the ceiling are used, just not for competition.

Mr. McKeon said that in passing Freedom High School the same weekend at about six o'clock in the evening, he noticed a Bethlehem Area School District bus sitting at the school that appeared to be the same one that was there since the morning. Was that the same bus that was there at eight o'clock in the morning? He was concerned that a driver was paid for all those hours when the bus depot was located next door to the school.

Mr. Harris stated that it may not have been since there were multiple events being held at the school that day.

Mr. McKeon asked how bus requests are made and who approves the requests.

Dr. Donaher said it would be researched what buses were at the school that weekend and how long they were there.

Dr. Lewis announced that there is approximately \$114,000 coming back to the district for the reading support program. There will be a recommendation appearing for reading teachers.

Mrs. Leeson thanked Dr. Lewis for pursuing this money. She was happy to see the reading program have support.

Mrs. Koch said that at a recent expulsion session, there was a question as to why only one report could be filed on a student when three teachers were involved in the incident.

Dr. Donaher said this was an exception as only one teacher had access to the system to file the report. That teacher was going to let the other two teachers involved file the reports under his/her login name.

Dr. Lewis said this is a limitation of the current system and it will be corrected.

Mr. Tenaglia said he noticed that 28 1/2 students were in one classroom at Hanover Elementary School. What was being done to rectify this?

Dr. Lewis said the board was approached in the past about creating another teaching position at Hanover.

Mrs. Dexter asked if there was any news if the cellular tower located by Clearview Elementary School was approved.

Mrs. Leeson said the city has moved forward because the school district did not “object” to it being placed there.

Mr. Gilliland said that research of the long term health effects of cellular towers and a letter was sent to the City of Bethlehem. He stated the letter asked the city to consider obtaining other pertinent data relative to any adverse affects associated by being in close proximity to the specific cellular towers proposed. The letter asked the city to inform the district of the results of their analysis. Mr. Gilliland stated that he has not heard from them since the letter was sent.

Mrs. Dexter requested Mr. Gilliland to find out if it was “a done deal.” She then asked if the board would be receiving any information regarding class sizes in the district. She noted that Donegan Elementary School has 79 fifth grade students and five (5) fifth grade teachers. Why do we have five (5) fifth grade teachers for 79 students?

Mr. Washington answered that it was because of the title funding and low poverty area. He will research that situation.

Dr. Lewis said it was not too late to make adjustments. It will be reviewed at the next Cabinet meeting.

Mrs. Leeson asked Mr. Washington to research the amount of children that are open enrolled at Hanover. If there is not enough room for the open enrolled students, their applications for open enrollment should have been denied.

Mr. Washington stated that he believed there were approximately two students in that grade that were open enrolled, but he would double check that figure.

Mrs. Dexter said she noticed that there were about 60 fewer students than projected for the year, but the same amount of teachers. There were 37 more students enrolled at Miller Heights Elementary School and the loss of one teacher. Why was this the case? There are many discrepancies that need to be worked out.

Mrs. Leeson asked how many students were projected in the budget for the 2008-2009 school year.

Mr. Majewski said a more accurate enrollment figure will be available as of October 1. There is no huge difference from what was originally projected.

Mrs. Leeson said there were 15,508 students projected and the enrollment figures state that 15,153 attended in the first few days of classes. That is a difference of about 400 students; it is a large difference when you figure the cost per student in the budget. She would like to see the enrollment numbers at October's meeting as some expenses are based on a per student basis.

Mr. Majewski said the information will be provided on enrollment figures.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 p.m.

Minutes prepared by:

Kristen M. Snyder, Secretary to the Director of Facilities and Operations

Scott T. Gilliland, Director of Facilities and Operations