

Our mission is to provide rigorous and varied educational opportunities that challenge and engage all students to attain their highest level of intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth. (2007)

LITCHFIELD SCHOOL BOARD - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT NO. 27

Litchfield, New Hampshire 03052

APPROVED MINUTES

April 2, 2008

PUBLIC HEARING

(approved as amended 4-9-08)

Present:

Mr. Dennis Miller, Chair
Mrs. Cindy Couture, Vice Chair
Mr. Ralph Boehm, Board Member
Mrs. Pat Jewett, Board Member
Mrs. Dot Beauregard, Board Member
Dr. Elaine Cutler, Superintendent
Mr. Steve Martin, Business Administrator
Mr. Robert Manseau, Principal, CHS
Mrs. Michele E. Flynn, Secretary

Public Hearing, Call to Order 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Miller called the public hearing to order at 7:32 p.m.

Mr. Miller explained that the School Board asked for a traffic study related to the flow of traffic in the CHS parking lot and the purpose of the public hearing was to gain public input and further information regarding the recommendations that resulted from the traffic study.

Superintendent's Report

1) Presentation of the CHS Traffic Study Committee Recommendation

Mr. Martin indicated that the original problem was brought to light last year with concerns that centered around safety regarding parents dropping off and picking up students in the South parking lot and the ability of buses to exit the site in time to make their next run at the next school. He explained that currently traffic exits from the North side of the school. The Nashua Regional Planning Commission was asked to perform a traffic study. The initial recommendation from the NRPC was to make the South entrance a two-way exit/entrance, which would allow students parking in the South lot not to interfere with the buses and would give the students another egress. The Board chose not to follow the recommendation.

Former CHS Principal, Michael Parent, Facility Manager, Sue Ayer, Chief O'Brion, Chief Scofield, Road Agent Gerry DeCosta, and Mr. Martin formed a committee and met to devise a temporary change in the traffic flow. A stop sign was placed on Highlander Court at the road in front of the main entrance so that school buses would have the right-of-way; the East perimeter road was changed to a South thruway; and staff was placed in the parking lot to stop traffic for buses to exit. There was some improvement, but a problem remained with relation to parent drop offs and congestion in the South lot.

Mr. Martin indicated that the NRPC was asked to perform another observation at CHS. The committee [Steve Martin, Robert Manseau, Sue Ayer, Matt Bennett (Building & Grounds Coordinator), Chief O'Brion, Chief Scofield, and Cindy Couture], joined by Tim Roach from the NRPC, met to review the recommendation from the NRPC. Gerry DeCosta was not present for the meeting, but sent his agreement after reviewing the meeting summary notes. The committee, after much deliberation, arrived at the following recommendation that minimizes the two-way traffic areas into, out of, and on the site.

1. Make the North entrance a one-way exit with left and right turn lanes, forcing all incoming traffic to the South entrance;
2. Put stop signs at the exits from the North parking lot;
3. In the South parking lot, make the South lane one-way going East toward the track and the North lane one-way going West toward Albuquerque. Restripe the South lot with angled spaces in the direction of the traffic;
4. Make the temporary stop sign in the South lot permanent;
5. Make the East perimeter road a one-way permanently;
6. Open the emergency access road off Talent Road for buses and emergency vehicles to enter only with a power gate;
7. Construct a parent drop-off on the West side (near the SAU office).

This was the recommendation presented to the School Board on March 12. The Board can choose do all, some or none. Mr. Martin expressed that in his opinion the North entrance changes, one-way traffic flow, and the student parking changes are the most critical.

Board Comments

Mrs. Couture commented that we must separate bus traffic from car traffic when planning a school. In this case, a parent drop-off was never designed.

Mr. Boehm commented that many schools have bus traffic routes only. The temporary solution was the result of buses arriving late at GMS.

Mrs. Beauregard noted that some safety issues prompted the necessity for more control in getting the students into the building. Safety is a priority and we have to account for the buses, students, parents, neighbors, and building access. She added that we are hoping to derive a feasible solution and consider the cost.

Mrs. Jewett commented that the main concern is safety.

Mr. Miller indicated that the recommendation doesn't solve the parent pick-up problem in the afternoon as parents park in places that are not appropriate. He suggested we add (#8) a parent pick-up area on the North side of the building.

Mr. Manseau observed that the morning parent drop-off is working as parents have a designated spot in the center of the South lot to drop off students. There is concern with moving the parent pick up area and the possibility of a traffic issue.

Mr. Miller indicated that the North parking lot spaces against the practice field are empty in the afternoon and could be designated for a parent pick-up area.

Michael Clark asked if there were any plans to expand student parking as the lot fills up quickly. Mr. Manseau noted that there are enough spaces for the students as the lot fills up during the year, but less students are parking at the beginning and end of the school year.

Community Comments

Dave Conole, 110 Talent Road, noted that there are a few problems. He queried about the access road proposed option noting that as buses are entering and students are navigating the South lot could cause a potential accident. He also asked about the type of power gate that is being proposed. Mr. Martin responded that an activator would open the gate for the buses to enter.

Mr. Conole asked if a power gate would impact emergency vehicles. Mr. Martin answered that the emergency vehicles usually enter through the student parking lot, but would have access to the power gate.

Gina Ferlan, 109 Talent Road, queried about the number of students that are bused in relation to using smaller buses. Mr. Miller indicated that approximately 160 students are bused. Mr. Martin stated we could not fill fewer buses as

the routes would be too long to meet the next school pick-up. He also responded that the contract is for the same buses for all three schools and there would not be much savings in gas using smaller buses.

Ms. Ferlan asked about parking permits for students at CHS and if there is a criteria or are they available to all students. Mrs. Couture indicated that parking permits are sold to students and that there are restrictions that apply.

Ms. Ferlan raised a concern over buses entering the access road on Talent Road indicating that the visibility when traveling from the corner of Mulberry and Talent is poor.

A community member commented that she was in favor of the morning drop-off, indicating that it works well.

The discussion continued on the pros and cons of the recommendations and suggestions.

Dennis Perreault, a CHS faculty member, commented that he is in the student parking lot every afternoon. The NRPC did not see the problem during their observation as it was not a messy winter day. Mr. Perreault indicated that the major problem is traffic entering the South entrance and taking the left turn onto Highlander Court. There is a traffic jam on Albuquerque with cars stacking waiting for people to make the turn into the lot.

Mr. Miller commented that people need to be held accountable for not adhering to the stop signs in the South lot. Mr. Perreault suggested that a police officer should be stationed there to enforce the signs. Mr. Manseau indicated that CHS will have their School Resource Officer back next week and could satisfy Mr. Perreault's suggestion.

Mr. Perreault raised concerns with a parent pick up in the North parking lot, noting that a staff member will have to enforce the stop sign for traffic exiting the lot. He also expressed that there is a safety concern for walkers. He added that he supports the original plan – traffic entering in the South lot and flowing through the parking lot down along the front of the school, taking a right to exit through the North.

Mrs. Beauregard indicated that Board members need to review the information received tonight and queried about a police officer to direct traffic on Albuquerque in the afternoon. Mr. Manseau offered that the School Resource Officer can direct traffic, but we cannot count on a police officer who is normally on patrol during the day.

Mr. Martin pointed out that Chief O'Brion suggested printing consequences for ignoring the stop signs in the parent/student handbooks.

Board Action

- 1) Approval/Rejection of the CHS Traffic Study Committee Recommendation
Board members did not take action on the recommendation as more information and review is need. Mr. Martin indicated there are no cost estimates associated with the recommendation at this time. Dr. Cutler recommended that Mr. Martin can return on May 7 with the recommended costs.

Mrs. Jewett made a motion to table the issue until the May 7 meeting. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

Public Hearing closes at 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele E. Flynn
School Board Secretary