

SAU 41 GOVERNING BOARD
DECEMBER 13, 2018
MEETING MINUTES

A meeting of the SAU 41 Governing Board was conducted on Thursday, December 13, 2018 at 6:02 p.m. at the Hollis Brookline Middle School.

Tammy Fareed, Chairman, presided:

Members of the Board Present: Erin Sarris, Vice Chairman
Holly Deurloo Babcock, Secretary
Elizabeth Brown, Hollis/Brookline COOP (arrived at 6:37 p.m.)
John Cross, Secretary, Hollis/Brookline COOP
Rebecca Howie, Brookline School Board
Kenneth Haag, Vice Chairman, Brookline School Board
Matthew Maguire, Chairman, Brookline School Board
Robert Mann, Chairman, Hollis School Board
Cindy VanCoughnett, Vice Chairman, Hollis/Brookline COOP
Krista Whalen, Hollis/Brookline COOP

Members of the Board Absent: Tom Enright, Hollis School Board
Tom Solon, Chairman, Hollis/Brookline COOP
Amy Kellner, Secretary, Hollis School Board
Melanie Levesque, Hollis/Brookline COOP
Alison Marsano, Secretary, Brookline School Board

Also in Attendance: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent
Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator
Linda Sherwood, Assistant Business Administrator

APPOINTMENT OF PROCESS OBSERVER

Chairman Fareed appointed John Cross to serve as Process Observer.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

Superintendent Corey requested the agenda be adjusted to include, under Deliberations, Board action relative to the vote taken at the May 10, 2018 meeting concerning merit increases, salary adjustments, and employee benefits. The action was taken in non-public session. In order to ensure full transparency, legal counsel was asked to provide a motion that could be used to ensure the public meeting minutes note the action taken.

Superintendent Corey spoke of two (2) bids on the transportation contract (comparison attached) received in response to the Request for Proposal (RFP). Work continues in regard to finalizing references.

There being no objection, the agenda was adjusted as requested.

CORRESPONDENCE

Chairman Fareed spoke of an email received from Darlene Mann, Chairman, COOP Budget Committee, notifying she observed an irregularity between the FY18 unexpended funds and FY19 expenditures. The Board voted in May to expend unexpended funds from the FY18 budget in this calendar year for personnel at the SAU. That action was not recorded in the public meeting minutes.

Ms. Mann also indicated concern the Board had not taken the required step to gain permission from the Commissioner of Education to expend the funds. Superintendent Corey consulted with legal counsel, James O’Shaughnessy, Esq., who rendered a written opinion in which he quoted many RSAs that state SAU Governing Boards across the State are not the same kind of entity as district school boards. The SAU is a municipal corporation not restricted in the same ways school boards are.

Not only is the Governing Board not required to apply to the Department of Education, there is no way to do so, and the Commissioner of Education has no method for replying to the Board in any legalistic way or any authority at all. The Governing Board is permitted to take the step it took.

The step was taken in the context of a prior instance of something similar in 2016 at which time Attorney Drescher was consulted and provided the opinion that formed the background for how the Board chose to move forward. Attorney O’Shaughnessy believes that opinion to remain relevant and valid. However, he does agree the motion should have been made in public session. He also recommends, for the sake of complete transparency, that public hearings be conducted when wishing to expend unexpended funds in the future.

FY20 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

MOTION BY MEMBER CROSS TO RECESS UNTIL THE CONCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED FY20 BUDGET

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER WHALEN

MOTION CARRIED

9-0

The Board recessed at 6:08 p.m.

The Board reconvened at 6:32 p.m.

PUBLIC INPUT - None

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

SAU 41 Governing Board October 11, 2018

The following amendment was offered:

Page 5, Line 7; delete “but”

MOTION BY MEMBER DEURLOO BABCOCK TO APPROVE, AS AMENDED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HAAG

MOTION CARRIED

9-0

Members Maguire and VanCoughnett Abstained

Special SAU 41 Governing Board October 29, 2018

MOTION BY MEMBER MANN TO APPROVE, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HAAG
MOTION CARRIED
9-0

SAU 41 Governing Board - Non-Public October 29, 2018

MOTION BY MEMBER MANN TO APPROVE, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HAAG
MOTION CARRIED
9-0

Member Brown arrived at 6:37 p.m.

DELIBERATIONS

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the proposed FY20 Operating Budget

MOTION BY MEMBER DEURLOO BABCOCK TO APPROVE THE FY20 BUDGET IN THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF ONE MILLION SEVEN HUNDRED NINETEEN THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED FOURTEEN DOLLARS (\$1,719,314)
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MANN
MOTION CARRIED
9-0

Superintendent Corey requested a motion to include in the public record action taken by the Board at its May 10, 2018 meeting relative to merit increases, salary adjustments, and employee benefits.

MOTION BY MEMBER MANN TO PLACE IT ON THE PUBLIC RECORD THAT THE SAU 41 GOVERNING BOARD, AT ITS MAY 10, 2018 MEETING, APPROVED THE EXPENDITURE OF FORTY THREE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED SEVENTY DOLLARS (\$43,970) TO COVER THE COST OF MERIT INCREASES, SALARY ADJUSTMENTS AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS. OF THAT \$43,970, THE SAU 41 GOVERNING BOARD APPROVED TWENTY FOUR THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED SEVENTY DOLLARS (\$24,970) WOULD COME FORM THE SAU FUND BALANCE ACCOUNT, AND TO REFLECT, FOR THE RECORD, THAT SUCH EXPENDITURE HAD NO NEW IMPACT ON TAXES
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MAGUIRE

ON THE QUESTION

Superintendent Corey noted the non-public minutes of May 10th were sealed based on the subject matter. The motion/vote relative to the expenditure should be made known to the public. Legal counsel has recommended

the motion be made so that the action is noted in public meeting minutes.

MOTION CARRIED

9-0

TRANSPORTATION

- Request for Proposal (RFP) - Update

Superintendent Corey informed the Board of two bids received; Hollis Transportation and Butler Transportation. He noted work done by the Business Administrator to provide an apples-to-apples comparison as traditionally how one company does the special education calculations is not exactly the same as the other. He indicated he was not seeking Board action, at this time, understanding the need for review of the information and getting it out in the public minutes. He spoke of the need to schedule a special meeting in the month of January noting waiting longer than that would cause difficulty for budgeting purposes.

On the comparison provided, bid information was broken down by individual school district. The regular route is the customary pick-up with the large yellow buses, special education could be in two forms; van/small bus and in and out-of-district. Some special education transportation runs cost, by themselves, approx. \$40,000/year for students traveling to some of the further out-of-district placements.

	<u>Hollis Trans.</u> (increase over FY19)	<u>Butler Trans.</u> (increase over FY19)
<u>Hollis School District</u>		
Regular Route	\$ 368,537 (\$62,003 or 20%)	\$ 393,380 (\$86,848 or 28%)
Special Education	105,870 (\$13,809 or 15%)	112,314 (\$20,253 or 22%)
Total:	\$ 474,407 (\$75,812 or 19%)	\$ 505,694 (\$107,100 or 50%)
<u>Amount over FY20 Est.</u>	\$ 28,083	\$ 59,371
<u>Brookline School District</u>		
Regular Route	\$ 317,951 (\$67,581 or 27%)	\$ 307,940 (\$57,571 or 23%)
Special Education	220,248 (\$28,728 or 15%)	232,824 (\$41,304 or 22%)
Total:	\$ 538,199 (\$96,309 or 42%)	\$ 540,764 (\$98,875 or 45%)
<u>Amount over FY20 Est.</u>	\$ 44,799	\$ 47,364
<u>COOP School District</u>		
Regular Route	\$ 562,984 (\$80,970 or 17%)	\$ 676,060 (\$194,045 or 40%)
Special Education	538,976 (\$70,301 or 15%)	570,846 (\$102,171 or 22%)
Athletics	87,620 (\$11,429 or 15%)	152,383 (\$76,191 or 100%)
Total:	\$1,189,580 (\$162,700 or 16%)	\$1,399,289 (\$372,408 or 36%)
<u>Amount over FY20 Est.</u>	\$ 37,441	\$ 247,149

Noted was the need for Butler Transportation to secure a bus barn. They are looking at potential properties. Superintendent Corey has reached out to the Town Administrator; there are a few parcels that will be looked at.

Superintendent Corey stated he and the Business Administrator continue to work with the transportation companies to ensure the information has been interpreted correctly. He has reached out to the neighboring communities regarding their relationships with the company they utilize. Numbers presented portray a picture of the rising costs for transportation, and would allow both companies to be on par with how drivers are being compensated around the State. It is hoped that would eliminate or reduce the loss of drivers to competition.

Mr. Maguire questioned if the quotes are apples-to-apples in terms of the number of buses and routes, and was informed they are for regular education runs. Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator stated they tried to make sure they are apples-to-apples for special education, but they have two different approaches. It is possible that the number of buses/routes could differ, but as far as the bids are concerned, the information on routes was an apples-to-apples comparison.

Mr. Maguire commented on the large differential in the COOP School District athletic runs questioning if Butler Transportation might be quoting something differently or not quite understand the current situation. Ms. Seeley stated the intent to get that clarified. Superintendent Corey stated he reached out to Rhon Rupp, Athletic Director, and asked that question. His research indicated the District pays likely 50% of what other districts pay for their athletic budgets. At times there have been concerns with obtaining athletic runs based on driver availability, etc., but from the standpoint of what we get for those charter runs, it has always been a bargain from Hollis Transportation.

Mr. Maguire questioned if the pricing provided was based on all three districts choosing a single transportation company. Ms. Seeley responded she has not asked that specific question, but is fairly confident their proposals were based on obtaining a contract to service all three districts.

Mr. Cross noted concern with the difference in cost of athletic runs questioning if Hollis Transportation would have to boost that price quite a bit to ensure drivers are compensated in a manner that would result in retention. Superintendent Corey responded it provides the driver the salary the regular route driver would get. You are looking at only away transportation. Hollis Transportation has always approached that as an opportunity for their drivers to earn extra money. They typically only use their fleet. In conversations with a number of transportation companies, he learned some have drivers that only do charter runs.

Mr. Cross questioned if, with Butler Transportation, athletic routes would be run by completely different drivers. Superintendent Corey stated his belief, were Butler Transportation awarded the contract, they would see how many drivers they could secure from Hollis Transportation.

Chairman Fareed questioned if there is a factor between the two related to distance/time. Superintendent Corey reiterated, were Butler Transportation to be awarded the contract, he believes they would be looking in Brookline for a bus barn. In some ways when you look at some of the numbers, your mileage changes, e.g., increased mileage cost when driving the bus from Brookline to Hollis.

Ms. Whalen questioned if Butler can handle the capacity commenting five years ago when going through this process, they were unable to service Milford, Amherst, and the SAU. Superintendent Corey stated they feel quite confident. Historically, this company had a very large fleet, which was sold off. About 15 years ago, they returned to the bus business, and have an extensive group of buses (NH and VT). There is the potential for economy of scale from the point of, if providing athletic runs and field trips to 3 districts, the likelihood that buses would not be available on any given day would be smaller.

Superintendent Corey spoke of a discussion with the Superintendent in Amherst who stated Butler Transportation does a great job, but described it very much, from an organizational standpoint, the same as our current situation with Hollis Transportation. He has a call in to speak with the Superintendent in Milford.

Ms. Whalen asked if the increase for Hollis Transportation, above what was estimated, is due to the fact that they will pay drivers more or another reason. Superintendent Corey stated his belief the significant increase is in bringing more drivers up to a comparable wage. In recent years, the SAU worked with Hollis Transportation around longevity offerings. From a contractual point of view, the SAU had locked into a third year with Hollis Transportation at a very attractive rate, which included a rate for the drivers. What is being seen in the bid pricing is their efforts to catch up to the standard rate. He stated his belief, if looking at the Hollis Transportation bid, the districts could potentially adjust the district budgets without impacting any significant pieces.

Ms. Brown referred to the FY19 cost for athletic runs (\$76,191) questioning if it includes all of the cover costs already expended for this school year. She stated there to have been a number of sports teams in the fall who did not have transportation available. Vans were rented, members of golf teams were on the same vans as members of softball teams, students were driven from Hollis to catch buses in Milford to get to track meets, etc. There were a variety of efforts undertaken to get students to their events. As a result, there were additional costs as well as a good deal of collaboration with other communities.

Ms. Seeley stated the numbers listed were strictly those identified in budgets. Ms. Brown stated the need to understand what actual costs were for FY19. She remarked the transportation company avoided disruption to the Hollis School District by basically not running athletic runs at the COOP School District. She commented it makes the contract look like they were able to provide a level of service for that price that maybe they weren't actually providing.

Superintendent Corey commented he agrees with the statement, which is why he was not seeking Board action at the time. He simply wanted to get the information out to the Board and public so that those type of questions could be raised. He anticipates receiving questions/feedback from members of the public who have been involved with some of the missed athletic runs, doubling routes, etc. The desire is for all to understand the numbers involved as the expenditure is a community decision.

Ms. Brown stated her belief the double runs were having a pretty significant impact on some of the elementary students in Hollis and the education that could be provided before 9:15 a.m. when the second group of students arrived.

Chairman Fareed noted, with regard to missed athletic runs, the SAU has been reimbursed (rebates). Superintendent Corey responded they have been; however, it is still relatively early in the year and one of the most intense sports seasons is the spring. He stated his belief that is a point that should be brought up with Hollis Transportation to obtain a concrete answer. He noted, if the will of the Board, the two bidders could be asked to attend a future meeting.

Ms. Deurloo Babcock remarked her general concern is can the transportation companies provide the level of service indicated at the cost stated. She spoke of the need for some sort of data/evidence indicating that ability.

Ms. Brown questioned if the bid from Hollis Transportation includes the intent to provide greater compensation to drivers. Ms. Seeley noted the bid lists what the salary will be. Asked what the percentage of increase would be, Ms. Seeley indicated she was uncertain. Asked if the proposed increase would put them at market rates, she indicated her belief it would.

Superintendent Corey stated he has spoken with them many times, and understands that to be their intent, and stated his confidence they have raised their rates to be competitive. He remarked Ms. Deurloo Babcock raised the point he is unsure waiting can solve; what will the driver shortage look like come next year, where will the economy be, etc.

They have seen an uptick; have had 4 drivers in training. Two went through a large part of the training before realizing being a bus driver was not for them. The Governor put together a commission to look at this issue. Our input to that has been seeking ways to accelerate the process from walking into a bus barn to becoming a licensed driver able to get behind the wheel (approx. 3 month process).

Ms. Sarris questioned if there are issues related to fleet size; is the # of buses in Hollis Transportation's fleet sufficient, and do the bids identify an equal # of buses. Ms. Seeley stated the bids to be apples-to-apples in that sense (regular education). You cannot predict if routes would be reconfigured, etc.

Mr. Cross questioned if there are metrics that can be used to compare the number of routes missed in a given year, etc. He spoke of the SAU's experience with Hollis Transportation and lack of experience with Butler Transportation. Superintendent Corey stated that to be the reason for his calls to the Superintendents of the districts that utilize Butler Transportation. They have a larger pool to draw from, which in some ways can be attractive, but he also has concerns about that.

Mr. Cross suggested there should be some data to track number of stand-by drivers, additional buses, missed routes, bus down time, etc. Superintendent Corey stated the # of buses he does not believe to be a worry for either company. As we get further into the contract, the bus price is determined. If a route has to be added the cost would be allocated by the route.

Mr. Haag questioned if a comparison of the top 3-5 metrics could be requested/provided as well as plans for improvement. He would also like to see contingency plans; when a bus goes down, who they pull from, and a marketing plan for how they will go about attracting drivers.

Mr. Mann stated agreement with the information requested relative to processes; attracting and retaining drivers, marketing plan, philosophy around putting additional buses online when a spike in demand is seen, etc. Understanding those operational capabilities would assist in the decision making. He commented it is a leap of faith with either company, and questioned, given that, what the term of the contract might be.

Addressing the possibility of a shorter contract term, Ms. Deurloo Babcock noted the possibility one of the two companies may not be around in two years. Mr. Mann questioned Butler Transportation's capability of acquiring Hollis Transportation. Chairman Fareed questioned what the impact to the business process would be were that to occur.

Asked how comments would be captured and deployed back out, Superintendent Corey noted they would be included in the public meeting minutes. He and Ms. Seeley would extract the information from the meeting minutes and do their due diligence with the two vendors. When a meeting night is identified, the vendors can be invited to attend.

When asked if there might be opportunities for Board members to conduct onsite visits with the vendors, Superintendent Corey responded any member(s) of the Board wishing to participate in the interview process with him and the Business Administrator and/or site visits, should make him aware.

Mr. Cross questioned if the preference for Butler Transportation would be to have a bus barn in Brookline. Superintendent Corey stated there to be the need for a bus barn; Milford and Amherst are perhaps too great a distance. He is of the belief when searching for parcels of a certain size that already exist or could be quickly adapted, they felt there to be more potential opportunities in Brookline. They would have to enter into negotiations to obtain a lease, etc. Asked if that cost is included in the bid, Superintendent Corey stated his belief that cost would be a cost of doing business and would not be passed on to the SAU.

SUPERINTENDENT'S EVALUATION

- Timeline, Confirm Assignments, Explain Process

Superintendent Corey commented on the length of the document noting it is tied into the RSAs the SAU is governed by. It goes through a variety of components. Although it is the evaluation of the Superintendent, it overviews the staff that position directs, e.g., covers curriculum and provides feedback to work with the Assistant Superintendent, covers the Business Office and provides feedback to work with the Business Administrator and Assistant Business Administrators.

There are instances where it appears repetitive, but covers different domains (resulting from the way the RSAs are written). He believes the process to be a comprehensive one that conducts a 360° view of his performance, the SAU's performance, and results in a document he has been able to utilize for growth.

He provided the example of a question posed two years ago asking for more information around data and how educational decisions are made. He spoke of the data presentations that have been made to each of the districts commenting when you take that presentation and incorporate it into the professional development days the Assistant Superintendent has put forth and then look at the changes that have been made to the math curriculum under her leadership, the writing curriculum, and emphasis on STEM, then you go from there to the Business Administrator for approval to purchase materials you see what has been created are procedures that didn't exist five years ago. An example; a teacher looking to use a new piece of software, has to have it vetted through the technology committee at the SAU.

The document, although very tedious, has produced some tremendous pieces that wouldn't be observed publicly on a day-to-day basis, but has really set up policies and procedures that govern the running. What was looked at five years ago was to change the business model of the SAU to not only be something that focuses on educating our students in an outstanding fashion, but that has business practices so that 5 or 10 years from now when we go through transitions, there is the ability to move forward seamlessly.

The input from the individual Board member is submitted to the Board Chairman who then compiles the information into a single document that represents the District. That compilation is brought before the district Board for review. Once completed, the Board Chairs meet with the SAU 41 Governing Board Vice Chairman to create a document that the three district Board Chairs and the SAU Governing Board Chairman and Vice Chairman present to the Superintendent.

Vice Chairman Sarris questioned if the discussion that occurs with the SAU41 Governing Board is conducted in non-public session, and was informed it is. She asked, and was informed, the original intent was that time be allotted the district boards to meet in non-public session to discuss the roll-up of the responses; however, there have been years when time did not permit that to occur.

Mr. Mann stated it to be the work product of the district speaking to the performance of the Superintendent as seen in the individual district. Mr. Cross questioned, in the interest of gaining efficiencies, if the information could be distributed in advance. Chairman Fareed responded, in the past, this has been viewed as very sensitive personnel/confidential information. Vice Chairman Sarris questioned the option of a shared drive, and was told that is how it has been done for the past few years. Mr. Cross noted each district has its own; individual boards could see the responses of its board but not those of the others. Mr. Maguire stated the details provided are not shared between districts; only the roll-up is shared across districts.

Superintendent Corey cautioned on the need to follow established procedure. He will finish his five years this year. His recommendation, at that point, would be to build into the process, a change in the format for when the individual enters into a long-term contract; the responsibility become that of a sub-committee. Another change could be in moving the evaluation deadline (for a veteran contract) from February to May.

REPORT OUT BY PROCESS OBSERVER

Mr. Cross stated the meeting started at 6:02 p.m., the Board began the budget review at 6:09 p.m. and finished up around 6:20 p.m. The question and answer period around that continued until 6:31 p.m. Deliberations began at 6:30 p.m. and lasted about an hour; 45 minutes of which was the transportation discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY MEMBER MANN TO ADJOURN
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MAGUIRE
MOTION CARRIED
9-0

The December 13, 2018 meeting of the SAU41 Governing Board was adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Date: _____

Signed: _____

FY19 Bus RFP Bid Results

Route Type	Hollis School District							
	FY19 Cost	FY20 Estimate	Hollis Transportation			Butler Transportation		
			FY20 HT Bid	% Inc. Over FY19	\$ Inc. Over FY19	FY20 Butler Bid	% Inc. Over FY19	\$ Inc. Over FY19
Regular Route	\$306,534	\$344,034	\$368,537	20%	\$62,003	\$393,380	28%	\$86,846
Special Ed	\$92,061	\$102,290	\$105,870	15%	\$13,809	\$112,314	22%	\$20,253
Total	\$398,595	\$446,324	\$474,407	19%	\$75,812	\$505,694	50%	\$107,100
Over FY20 Est.			\$28,083			\$59,371		

Route Type	Brookline School District							
	FY19 Cost	FY20 Estimate	Hollis Transportation			Butler Transportation		
			FY20 HT Bid	% Inc. Over FY19	\$ Inc. Over FY19	FY20 Butler Bid	% Inc. Over FY19	\$ Inc. Over FY19
Regular Route	\$250,369	\$280,600	\$317,951	27%	\$67,581	\$307,940	23%	\$57,571
Special Ed	\$191,520	\$212,800	\$220,248	15%	\$28,728	\$232,824	22%	\$41,304
Total	\$441,889	\$493,400	\$538,199	42%	\$96,309	\$540,764	45%	\$98,875
Over FY20 Est.			\$44,799			\$47,364		

Route Type	Coop School District							
	FY19 Cost	FY20 Estimate	Hollis Transportation			Butler Transportation		
			FY20 HT Bid	% Inc. Over FY19	\$ Inc. Over FY19	FY20 Butler Bid	% Inc. Over FY19	\$ Inc. Over FY19
Regular Route	\$482,015	\$546,733	\$562,984	17%	\$80,970	\$676,060	40%	\$194,045
Athletics	\$76,191	\$84,657	\$87,620	15%	\$11,429	\$152,383	100%	\$76,191
Special Ed	\$468,675	\$520,750	\$538,976	15%	\$70,301	\$570,846	22%	\$102,171
Total	\$1,026,881	\$1,152,140	\$1,189,580	16%	\$162,700	\$1,399,289	36%	\$372,408
Over FY20 Est.			\$37,441			\$247,149		