

SPECIAL SAU 41 GOVERNING BOARD

MAY 29, 2019

**MEETING MINUTES**

A special meeting of the SAU 41 Governing Board was conducted on Wednesday, May 29, 2019 at 6:02 p.m. at the Hollis Brookline Middle School.

Cindy VanCoughnett, Vice Chairman, presided:

Members of the Board Present: Tammy Fareed, Treasurer  
Brooke Arthur, Secretary  
Holly Deurloo Babcock, Chairman, COOP School Board  
Kenneth Haag, Vice Chairman, Brookline School Board  
Rebecca Howie, Secretary, Brookline School Board  
Melanie Levesque, COOP School Board (arrived at 6:09 p.m.)  
Matthew Maguire, Chairman, Brookline School Board  
Robert Mann, Chairman, Hollis School Board  
Alison Marsano, Brookline School Board (arrived at 6:03 p.m.)  
Carryl Roy, Hollis School Board  
Tom Solon, Vice Chairman, COOP School Board (arrived at 6:23 p.m.)  
Beth Williams, Secretary, COOP School Board

Members of the Board Absent: Elizabeth Brown, COOP School Board  
Amy Kellner, Hollis School Board  
Erin Sarris, Chairman  
Krista Whalen, COOP School Board

Also in Attendance: Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent  
Meghan Glynn, Esq., Drummond Woodsum  
Doug Orde, Vice President, Hollis Transportation  
Gregg Stinson, V.P., Operations, Student Transportation of America

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**APPOINTMENT OF PROCESS OBSERVER**

Vice Chairman VanCoughnett appointed Holly Deurloo Babcock to serve as Process Observer.

**AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS**

A request was made to amend the agenda by adding a period for public comment prior to Discussion.

**PUBLIC INPUT** - None

**DISCUSSION**

Superintendent Corey spoke of the Town's loss with the passing of Al Orde. One of his first experiences in the District was when Mr. Orde showed up with his big pick-up and drove him around to show him the towns of Hollis and Brookline. It was a gesture that told you exactly who Al was. He extended condolences to the Orde family and the many individuals whose lives he touched over the years.

- Transportation Update

Superintendent Corey noted the communication provided with the [agenda](#). On May 8<sup>th</sup> he was informed by Doug Orde, Vice President, Hollis Transportation, that Hollis Transportation was considering an offer from Student Transportation of America (STA). Later that morning, he met with the Board Chair. An email was sent to the Board updating members on the situation.

At the May 9<sup>th</sup> SAU 41 Governing Board meeting, Robert Mann, Chairman, Hollis School Board, Alison Marsano, Brookline School Board, Cindy VanCoughnett, Vice Chairman, SAU 41 Governing Board (member of COOP School Board), and Tammy Fareed, SAU 41 Governing Board Treasurer, were selected to join Superintendent Corey and Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent, in a meeting with Doug Orde and Gregg Stinson, Vice President, Operations, Student Transportation of America.

The purchase of Hollis Transportation would entail STA leasing the bus barn from Doug Orde. STA is requiring that the bus barn have upgrades to the driver's area and that bathroom facilities be installed. Both upgrades have been agreed to by Doug Orde. The intent is that the lease and the contract would be renewed should the Board continue to contract with STA. STA would honor the recently approved/signed contract for the 3 years with the potential for 2 optional years. Hollis Transportation would continue to oversee the daily operations of the bus company. Both the mechanic and the dispatcher would remain, and Mr. Orde would work with STA during the transition. Mr. Stinson is the regional representative who would work with the SAU Administration should any issues be encountered.

Superintendent Corey spoke with Attorney O'Shaughnessy regarding what transpired. Attorney O'Shaughnessy is of the opinion, if STA is willing to absorb Hollis Transportation and the signed contract, it should be given strong consideration. The size of STA will address some of the issues Attorney O'Shaughnessy represented to Al and Nancy Orde during his meetings with them. Attorney O'Shaughnessy is also familiar with STA and has not heard anything negative from the school districts his firm represents.

Superintendent Corey reached out to the Superintendent in Goffstown and the Business Manager in Londonderry who are pleased with the service they receive from STA. Londonderry just signed a ten-year agreement with STA based on the positive experience they have had.

A series of questions were addressed during the meeting with STA and Hollis Transportation:

#### The Bus Fleet

STA has confirmed that all buses will be upgraded to 2016 buses or newer. All buses will be equipped with cameras and meet all requirements of the recently signed contract. With regard to specialty transportation items (e.g., wheelchair vans), based on the size and scope of STA, they would be able to furnish any unexpected transportation requirements needed to meet the needs of our students.

#### Policies and Procedures

STA would follow the policies and procedures that have been authorized by the school boards. An example would be returning students to their building when a parent or guardian was not able to meet the student at their designated stop. STA, through the Dispatcher, would continue their strong relationships with our building Principals.

### Bus Drivers

STA intends to offer current Hollis Transportation drivers the opportunity to continue with STA. Their goal is to retain as many of the current drivers as possible. STA has recruitment specialists dedicated to continually attracting drivers for open positions (recruitment plan attached to agenda). The Superintendent would retain the right, per the contract, to have any driver removed from transporting our students.

### Routes

STA will work with the SAU and the Hollis Dispatcher to review all routes and patterns to ensure efficient pick-up and deliver of our students. STA utilizes some of the most modern software packages for this purpose and has met the expectations of both the Londonderry and Goffstown districts with regard to route planning.

### Cross Rostering

STA will utilize the resources of the various bus barns across the State to ensure that service disruption is kept to a minimum. STA has local bus barns in Merrimack, Londonderry and Goffstown (complete list of their NH districts included with agenda). STA has agreed to work with the Superintendent to expedite the cross-rostering process, which will assist both our daily bus runs and athletic/extracurricular transportation needs. STA in fact has already assisted us, via their Londonderry terminal, with athletic transportation this spring.

### Assurance Bond

Hollis Transportation currently has an Assurance Bond in place that would expire with the current contract. The Superintendent was granted permission by Hollis Transportation to contact the Rowley Agency who currently holds the Assurance Bond. Ryan Stevens, who handles the Hollis Transportation account, stated Rowley Agency has a good relationship with Hollis Transportation and is prepared to issue a new bond when our current bond expires (6-30-19), if the sale falls through. STA informed they will be purchasing a bond to comply with the contract, and will have that in place when the sale is complete.

### Communication

STA will work with Hollis Transportation to increase communication to all stakeholders. STA has access to both GPS and apps which would enhance our communication with families. These upgrades are not included in the current contract, but would be available at a future date for a fee.

### Training of Drivers

STA employs full time trainers across their bus barns to expedite the required process for a driver to secure a license. Drivers in training are paid and the company provides roster bonuses for sign on and securing of the license. Drivers who refer candidates are also eligible for a bonus. STA will also provide the required training for cross-rostering of bus drivers.

Superintendent Corey noted a letter from Doug Orde dated May 13, 2019 in which Mr. Orde informed the Board of the intent to work with STA. They would become the purchaser of Hollis Transportation, and the current contract would be kept in its entirety with all components taken over by STA.

Included with the agenda was a statement provided by the Rowley Agency addressing the Assurance Bond. Also included was a brief history of the operations of the company (STA); 15,000 employees, 13,500 buses, 170 locations, serve 23 states, 2 Canadian provinces, and 300<sup>+</sup> school districts.

Superintendent Corey spoke of the Recruitment Plan noting it to be an area the district has been looking at. Hollis Transportation has done a commendable job of exhausting resources available to them to attract drivers. As a company that has dedicated people to recruiting, the plan identifies the daily actions of STA in this regard.

Mr. Mann requested clarification regarding whether the length of the barn lease would coincide with the length of the contract with the SAU.

Meghan Glynn, Esq., Drummond Woodsum, stated agreement the lease of the barn is a separate negotiation. However, it would be the obligation of STA to provide buses regardless of where they are housed. She does not believe there would be the need to include language regarding the bus barn with an agreement with STA.

Mr. Mann questioned the impact to operations should the lease of the bus barn come to an end.

Gregg Stinson, Vice President, Operations, STA, stated one of the contingencies in the Purchase & Sale will be that the facility is available not only through the current contract, but with options to extend into the future. He noted the discussions regarding additions to the facility.

Ms. Roy noted the information provided addresses driver training obligations, but does not specifically speak to policies, etc. She questioned if the level of training would change once STA is the employer of the fleet of drivers.

Mr. Stinson commented on discussions that occurred at a meeting earlier in the evening during which issues such as this were discussed with the existing drivers. He spoke of the consistent program the State has in regard to training requirements. STA would help supplement the existing training. They utilize a company by the name of School Bus Safety, which has a large library of training videos. The ten hour requirement to maintain certification would remain. They would continue to train regularly in addition to any other programs the district would like covered, e.g., evacuations, student management.

Ms. Roy stated the desire to ensure communication occurs with the driver fleet relative to district policies. Mr. Stinson stated Hollis Transportation staff is familiar with district policies, and STA would continue to support that. He spoke of the safety meetings, which are a two-way dialog and focus on issues that may be unique to a particular district.

Ms. Fareed asked for detail regarding how driver shortages are handled. Mr. Stinson responded noting ongoing recruitment efforts. Operating managers from each terminal communicate regarding absences and the need for coverage. With cross-rostering, they are able to address those needs (through other 12 operating locations in the State). In an emergency situation, there are managers who drive.

Mr. Haag questioned if STA carries floater drivers commenting on his belief the probability of some kind of issue happening across the State is relatively high each day. Mr. Stinson indicated they try to do that, but it is really based on what the employee is looking to do. Most drivers like to drive in their community; want familiarity with their route. They do hire charter drivers and those who wish to be spare drivers. They cater to whoever walks through the door, wants to be part of the team, and can meet the qualifications. He stressed they look to utilize drivers from the district for athletic runs, etc.

Mr. Stinson remarked what has been experienced by Hollis Transportation in terms of driver shortages has been experienced across the State. What STA has done is try to be responsive to the things that have happened and,

through its size, leverage the ability to utilize drivers from other areas. They have never compromised the integrity of their selection process. Although he could not guarantee every seat would be filled every time, he promised they would be diligent in filling the seats and responsive to the needs.

Mr. Solon spoke of the terms of the existing contract, and questioned how the cost compares to how STA would negotiate a contract having similar terms. Hollis Transportation has historically had a significantly lower cost than other transportation companies. He stated a concern once the existing contract expires, there will be a dramatically higher cost associated with transportation.

Mr. Stinson responded the existing contract is very favorable to the SAU. On the heels of his comment about the driver shortage, he noted with a lot of the districts they have negotiated with, increases they have negotiated have been passed on to the drivers in recognition of the industry challenge. Increases are to support labor, program, and facilities. He could not state what the cost would have been had STA bid the contract; however, indicated STA would pass increases off to the drivers.

Mr. Solon questioned if the pay and benefits provided to drivers would result in a significant difference in the cost model per driver for total compensation between what they would do were they coming in fresh versus having to assume the already negotiated contract. Mr. Stinson stated his belief it is pretty consistent with what STA does in neighboring communities. The goal is to be consistent.

Mr. Haag spoke of how the State influences the time period for drivers achieving their licenses, and questioned if STA is working with the State to improve that situation. Mr. Stinson responded they partner with the districts as the louder voice. STA is a contractor and therefore biased. The districts can communicate the cost to the district, students, etc. STA has, on many occasions, paid for Saturday test dates as a means of speeding up the licensing process.

Mr. Solon questioned the constraints on the possibility of the 2 additional years of the existing contract. Superintendent Corey responded the contract language spells out the 19-20 and 20-21 school years. With regard to the two additional years, both sides have the option. Asked for clarification of any constraints on the cost of the contract in those two years, Superintendent Corey stated in the 2022-2023 school year the SAU wide cost is \$1,292,956 and in the 2023-2024 school year it is \$1,402,429. When asked, he stated the third year of the contract is at a cost of \$1,255,102.

## **DELIBERATIONS**

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the Administration's recommendation with regards to student transportation

**MOTION BY MEMBER FAREED TO AUTHORIZE THE SUPERINTENDENT TO SIGN, ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD, THE CONSENT TO THE ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN HOLLIS TRANSPORTATION AND STUDENT TRANSPORTATION OF AMERICA, INC., WHEREBY STUDENT TRANSPORTATION OF AMERICA, INC., CONTINGENT ON THE COMPLETION OF ITS PURCHASE OF HOLLIS TRANSPORTATION, INC., WOULD ABSORB AND HONOR THE CURRENT THREE-YEAR CONTRACT, WITH THE POTENTIAL FOR TWO OPTIONAL YEARS, BETWEEN SAU 41 AND HOLLIS TRANSPORTATION, INC.**

**MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MANN  
ON THE QUESTION**

Ms. Fareed remarked Superintendent Corey indicated Attorney O'Shaughnessy has stated he has not received any complaints from the other districts he represents that utilize STA. In addition, the districts he has reached

out to have indicated their satisfaction with STA. Superintendent Corey reiterated he reached out to the districts of Goffstown and Londonderry, two districts that he has an existing relationship with. They both spoke very favorably of STA. Attorney O'Shaughnessy has stated, from his dealings with other districts his firm represents and who utilize STA, they have no major concerns that he is aware of.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**9-0**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO ADJOURN**

**MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER LEVESQUE**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**9-0**

The May 29, 2019 special meeting of the SAU 41 Governing Board was adjourned at 6:36 p.m.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_