

**Coventry Board of Education
Coventry, CT
Transportation Committee-Unapproved Minutes
Meeting of Tuesday, September 22, 2009**

Members Present: Cheryl Trudon, Transportation Committee Chairman
Kathleen Ryan

Members Absent: John Barrett

Administrators Present: Sherry Holmes, Fiscal Services Director

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm by Cheryl Trudon.

II. Audience of Citizens

Dawn Messier of 111 Old Tavern Lane stated she hoped for a resolution to the Cheney Bus schedule. She said that the schedule allows some kids to get to their home address. She said the schedule does require some kids to walk a long distance to reach their home. She said she wanted to work with the Transportation Committee to find a solution.

Kathy Graham of 192 Nathan Hale Road said that her son Stephen, and the kids on the bus, like the old route better than the new route. She questioned why it takes so much longer to get home than it does in the morning to get to school.

Susan Putnam of 461 Merrow Road said that she followed the bus home from Cheney Tech one day. She said the bus was the fourth bus that day. She said by 2:08 pm all the buses turned off their flashing lights. She said that streams of cars tried to get out before the bus, holding up the buses. She said this took 2 minutes. She said there was a lot of traffic on the main road. She said that the bus was driven at 55 mph, staying in the right hand lane on the 84 highway. She said the bus arrived on route 44 at 2:29. She said it took the bus approximately 5 minutes to drop off kids at Twin Hills.

Kathleen Ryan said at 6:45 am there is not as much traffic as there is at the end of the school day. She said that at 2:00 pm, two high schools are releasing students.

Dawn Messier said that when the bus dropped off the Twin Hills students at the end of the day, it did not gain any time; it wasted time, according to her son. She said her son thought the 384 route was quicker.

Kathy Graham said her son is dropped off at 3:10pm, at the top of Judd Road. She said he walks 20-25 minutes to home, which is approximately one mile. Kathleen Ryan said that a 1 mile distance is within a high school student's parameters to walk to a bus stop. There was a discussion of possible long walks to bus stops.

Dawn Messier asked if the bus from Cheney Tech ever traveled a straight shot to Coventry High School, without making stops. Sherry Holmes said the bus arrived at the Coventry/Bolton line at 2:26pm. S. Holmes said the Coventry buses pull out of the Middle School at 2:28pm. S. Holmes said it was impossible for the Cheney bus to arrive at the Middle School by 2:28 pm. S. Holmes told the bus driver to drop off as many students as possible along the bus route, until he arrived at G.H. Robertson. S. Holmes said the second time they tried using route I-84, which brought them to the town line of Coventry/Tolland by 2:24 pm. S. Holmes read the list of bus stops. S. Holmes said the bus then traveled to G.H. Robertson School, arriving at 3:07 pm.

There were discussions of the Woodmont and Brick Schoolhouse Bus Stops, a Cassidy Hill student, and the 1 mile walking parameters for high school students.

Nancy Francis, a Cassidy Hill resident was present at the meeting.

III. Cheney Tech Bus Route – Discussion and Possible Solutions

Sherry Holmes said she learned that both Windham Tech and E.O. Smith were released early. She said these students made it back to Coventry for the Coventry High School bus dismissal.

Sherry Holmes said she called the administration at Cheney Tech. She said the dismissal time at Cheney Tech is 2:03 pm. S. Holmes asked the administration if the students could be dismissed three minutes earlier. She said if they were dismissed earlier, they could figure out where the bottleneck was that caused a delay in the bus schedule. She said the administration would not release the students earlier. S. Holmes also found out that some towns send bus drivers to Cheney Tech at noon to get a spot in the bus line up. She said there are many factors causing the bus to be late including construction and high school student drivers getting in front of the buses at dismissal time. She said M & J have consistently tried to get their bus to Cheney Tech early. Sherry said we have tried 9 years to make the Coventry High School dismissal time, but have not made it.

Sherry Holmes said John Barrett could not be at the meeting tonight. She said his response to change the Cheney Bus Route was as follows:

He said “Is it possible there is no resolution and we will have upset parents? This is one of the problems when we choose alternative education for our children, and one of the inconveniences. If there are no reasonable solutions, then maybe it is time to drop the problem back into the parent’s lap.”

Sherry Holmes said she worked with Michael Collins of M & J Bus. She said he came up with a solution that he would like to take one of the buses out of the high school run. She said he would offload those kids onto other buses at the Middle/High Schools. She said that bus would go out and meet the Cheney Bus at the Coventry/Bolton line in the parking lot where the auction is. Mr. Collins suggested offloading North end of Coventry on one bus, and South end of Coventry on another. Mr. Collins said this way all of the students would be delivered before the elementary school runs are started. S. Holmes said Mr. Collins has tested it, and can complete the runs safely. S. Holmes said Mr. Collins does this with another school district. S. Holmes said she called Tolland and found that

Tolland's Cheney bus does not make it back in time for their high school buses either. S. Holmes said Tolland runs two Cheney buses which deliver kids to the North and South ends of Tolland. S. Holmes said the students are all delivered in a timely manner, before the elementary runs begin. S. Holmes said this solution would not require spending any more money. S. Holmes said we have access to 78 passenger buses when overcrowding is an issue. S. Holmes said the larger buses have 6 more seats.

Kathleen Ryan asked if the new plan would alter the existing high school bus routes in Coventry. Sherry Holmes said the new plan would have to alter the existing bus routes. Sherry said a few routes would have to be re-organized. K. Ryan said our fallback, if this new route did not work, would be to go back to the original proposal. The original proposal brings the Cheney students to GHR.

IV. Vote to Approve Changes to Cheney Tech Route

Motion: To authorize Sherry Holmes to work with M & J Bus Co. to pilot the new bus route program.

Motion: Cheri Trudon Seconded: Kathleen Ryan

Discussion: S. Holmes said parents would be notified 24-hours before any bus route change. The bus company would send a notice home, or would call.

Motion passes.

V. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn at 7:14 pm.

Motion: K. Ryan Seconded: C. Trudon

Motion passes.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle M. Bates, BOE Clerk

Approved