

# **Spotlight on the Board**

## **Notes from the District 15 School Board Meetings**

### **October 18th, 2007**

This was a Special Board of Education meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to enter into an emergency short term busing agreement, until busing can be bid upon, as the law requires. Board members Millar, Carlson, Rowden and Quinn were in attendance. Board members Chapman, Ekeberg and Keenan were available by telephone. (Keenan physically entered the meeting at 8:05 p.m. as indicated in the notes.)

**Board President Tim Millar** announced that in order to approve the motion tonight, six out of the 7 Board members were needed to vote on the Resolution or it would not be valid because it was a Special emergency situation. **Dr. McKanna, Superintendent** then called Board members Chapman, Ekeberg and Keenan to have them available by telephone for the discussion before the vote.

**Board member Nancy Lee Carlson** – Suggested that the meeting agenda be changed so that the voting item is placed before the Citizens Address the Board portion.

**Millar** – Advised the audience that the Board is not allowed to discuss anything that is not on the published agenda, per school code. The agenda tonight is actually to approve the use of buses which is six buses, which may be amended as well, to solve a temporary problem on a temporary basis. That is what the Special meeting is for – it is not for a full Board discussion. It is to add buses to solve the problem that the District currently has at CLA – Conyers Learning Academy in Rolling Meadows. The Board will not be discussing changes in school start times tonight.

### **Consideration and Approval of Emergency Short Term Busing Agreement**

**Carlson** – Read the Resolution that the Board of Education was going to be voting on.

In summary – the Board was voting to award a contract for bus transportation services to Laidlaw Educational Services for a period of up to three months. This is being done on an emergency basis until a competitive bidding process could take place.

The Resolution continued with the following information . . .

- An emergency situation exists in the school district regarding the current student transportation schedule, in that if the Board were to wait to award a contract until after it completes the competitive bid process, the delay caused by the bid process would unreasonably prolong the timeframe to serve the students and have excessive unsupervised student wait times.

- The Board has met its obligation under the Illinois Labor Relation Act and is thereby permitted to enter into a three month contract for transportation services.

- As a result of this emergency situation, the Board hereby awards the transportation contract - not to exceed three months - to Laidlaw Educational Services in the amount of \$300 per bus for each day of operation. The President of the Board and Superintendent are authorized to execute the transportation contract.

- This Resolution shall be adopted in full force and be in effect upon its passage.

**McKanna** – Asked Millar if the Board wanted to specify the number of buses?

**Millar** – Indicated yes, under a special amendment. **Carlson** – Made the amendment that the District not exceed ten buses.

**Board member Kelly Keenan** (by phone) – Had a question. Thought the contract would be for three weeks until the next Board meeting (11/14). Wasn't aware that it was going to be for three months. **McKanna** – Said that three months was the longest period of time. That's what the attorneys directed them to do. The District is just trying to get through the bid process which in reality now will be probably be closer to four weeks. So we are just

trying to get ourselves up to when we get the bids in, and then the Board will make a decision and the administration will not exceed these buses once the Board makes a decision on any possible bids. **Keenan** – Thought it was only going to be six buses for 3 to 4 weeks.

**McKanna** – Said six buses is what the District had been offered immediately. There is some interest from some Board members to go up to 9 buses which the District was offered as of October 26th, which is a week from tomorrow. That's why Carlson has amended the motion to go up to a maximum of ten buses for this temporary period of time.

**Millar** – The Board is looking to authorize up to \$3,000 a day for up to 10 buses. Said it is definitely going to put a cramp in the budget but that is what the motion is. Asked if there was further discussion from any Board members present or on the phone?

**Board member Sue Quinn** – Commends Dr. McKanna and the staff for moving so quickly to get this in place for our kids. Thinks these six additional buses are going to alleviate the worst of our CLA problems temporarily until the District can properly bid out the contract buses for the rest of the year. At 60% to 100% reimbursement, she thinks it is something that the Board needs to do and hopefully the bidding costs will come in lower. The 100% reimbursement rate is from the State for Special Education. Quinn knows the Board cannot discuss bell changes in this meeting but wants to get a clarification from the Superintendent as to whether bell changes are not going to be discussed until the next Board meeting, and not implemented until the Board has an opportunity to discuss it?

**Board member Gerald Chapman** (by phone) – Couldn't hear Quinn's comments, asked if she was agreeing to the motion? Stated that he understands the motion is not to exceed three months. **Keenan** (by phone) – Said that ten buses are more than what is needed to solve any emergency. Doesn't see why ten buses are needed for three months.

**Board member Wendy Rowden** – Said that three months is not the intent – the intent is that the law allows for up to three months. The intent is to immediately bid out for these buses. The fact that it says three months in the Resolution is simply because that is what the law allows for.

**Chapman** (by phone) – (Made some additional comments in response to Keenan's concerns about bidding for ten buses, however, the comments were difficult to hear and were not picked up clearly by the audio recorder.)

**Millar** – Once the District gets the bid process going, there will be a Board meeting to discuss what our plan will be for the long term – which could be options of changing bell schedules or adding more buses. Discussion will take place before acting imprudently before understanding what the District is signing up for.

**McKanna** – This can be discussed at the November 14<sup>th</sup> Board meeting and another amendment can be done at that time for this temporary situation because the District won't have the bids by November 14<sup>th</sup>. **Chapman** (by phone) – Asked if it was a per diem cost that the District was going to pay? Administration answered yes.

**Keenan** (by phone) – Asked if this contract would be null and void when the Board takes different action. Wants to know that if the District gets in a position of purchasing 15 or 20 buses that it isn't also going to be leasing the ten buses per day.

**McKanna** – Answered yes, that is the intent. That can be made in an amendment that once the bids are acted on, this vote is null and void.

**Millar** – Clarified that the bids are for leasing buses not purchasing buses.

**Rowden** – Asked for a clarification before an amendment is made - that the District is not signing a three month agreement with Laidlaw – the District is on a per diem basis. The contract becomes null and void as soon as the District is done needing the buses.

**Millar** – Referred to the Laidlaw contract and said that it states that seven days after November 5<sup>th</sup>, the District can terminate the agreement with written notice.

**Chapman** (by phone) – Stated that was fair. (Additional comments were made regarding the Laidlaw contract that were not picked up clearly by the audio recorder.)

**Millar** – Thinks that the provision for terminating the contract once the bus services are not needed is already in the contract that the Board will be voting on.

**Roll call on the amended motion to contract with Laidlaw Educational Services for up to ten buses for a three month period.** Unanimously approved.

Ref: [www.laidlawcharters.com](http://www.laidlawcharters.com)

## Citizens Address the Board

(Keenan wanted to stay on the telephone for this portion of the meeting.)

### **Kathy Rabey – Immanuel Lutheran parent**

Wanted an explanation as to what just happened when the Board approved the ten buses? Will Immanuel Lutheran's start time change? **Millar** – No, not at all. The vote was to solve the busing problems at CLA. Buses right now are arriving from 10 to 30 minutes late – the afternoon classes are starting 20 minutes late and children are missing class. Millar mentioned a new law that doesn't allow the Board to contract out certain services so that is why the Board has to go through this process. Even if the Board wanted to contract with Laidlaw – the District has to publish it and have a 30 day notice, with public hearings.

**Rabey** – Asked if there would be a forum for Immanuel parents to come and discuss start times if they were going to change? **Millar** – The Board has not discussed that option (change in times) in detail as of yet. The District has no idea what the costs will be and it needs to get a better understanding of what problems we are going to solve. The Board is not there yet.

**Rabey** – We were informed that whatever happened tonight, we were going to be starting earlier. **McKanna** – Stated that she was misinformed. The District did ask St. Theresa and Immanuel Lutheran's school boards to consider moving their schedule up 20 minutes, it would not affect the length of the school day. Said that Don Skinner, Transportation Director and Bob Strande, Business Director attended those meetings with him. Said that because CLA, which also has 18 or 19 bus routes (similar to the parochial schools) – the District was considering moving CLA back 20 minutes later.

**McKanna** – Right now the buses leave St. Theresa's at 2:45 p.m. One bus driver told him today that they had to get from Hoffman Estates back to CLA in 30 minutes. McKanna said that none of us here in our car could do that. Said we can't solve the issue unless we get more buses – this is a temporary solution tonight. One option to look at was to move the start times. McKanna said that there are a lot of feelings on that option from Board members. Some are not in favor of that and some are. He said that if the District did that, it wouldn't be until Thanksgiving or later because the schools need to give people several weeks notice – for daycare and issues of staff taking classes, etc. Said we would give a fair amount of lead time notice. But stated that is not what is being done tonight. McKanna said that this meeting was strictly an emergency to try to get more buses so there are not St. Theresa's kids sitting three to a seat in a small bus and then that bus comes back and goes to pick up at CLA. Said that that bus driver was 15 to 20 minutes late getting to CLA.

**Rowden** – Wanted to clarify with McKanna that there would not be a change in bell times without Board discussion? Rowden said that if there are people here tonight that want to

comment, the Board would certainly listen. The Board just won't be discussing the bell change issue among themselves.

**Rabey** – Said that Immanuel Lutheran was notified that their start time could be moved significantly earlier – someone mentioned that next year they could be starting as early as 7:10 a.m. **McKanna** – Said that is wrong information. The administration will come back to the Board in January with what they think would be the best plan for the next school year. It may be later than January because the Board may want to work on it for several weeks or longer. There are some Board members that are interested in staying with two-tiers and some are interested in three-tiers. McKanna has said that he thinks the District needs to go to three tiers but that is just his opinion.

**Rabey** – Immanuel Lutheran certainly appreciates the earlier start that they have now. When the kids were starting at 7:20 a.m., they were not fully awake for school. Said that there has been a true transformation with the children with the later start time this year (7:55 a.m.) and they could like to continue with it and not try to go backwards – certainly not earlier than where they started. **McKanna** – that was one of the District's intents – to not have the private/parochial schools start so early and also to get a little more instructional time. **Rabey** – The impression that the Immanuel Lutheran parents had was that the District was going to make the decision tonight to move our time earlier – or change the bus stops or change a number of other things.

**Carlson** – Wants to suggest that since this is a hot issue for a lot of people and many people have many sides – would ask that everyone give the school district time to work it out and formulate a plan, have people listen to the plan and not listen to all of the rumors. Said to check the District's Web site. We will inform you as to what we believe will be the issues. Wants people to remember that bus routes are fluid, they are not static. Asked if maybe everybody would rethink what they are looking for and how to help everyone in the entire community – not just their own schools and their own section of the world. Realize that we are a community working together. It would help if everyone thinks about this, looks at it in the long run and give us time to work it out.

**Millar** – Said it would be great if the entire Board was here. This was supposed to be a 20 minute meeting just to approve the buses. **Rabey** – Appreciates that the Board is going to keep Immanuel Lutheran informed. **Millar** – Stated that the entire Board is concerned with the parochial schools as much as the public schools. It is a community and we all feel that – that's why the Board tried to get the bus/start times for everybody.

#### **Sandra – Immanuel Lutheran parent**

Just wanted to add that she thinks it is too hard for a child to be on a bus for an hour – whether for public or private school. She too noticed a huge difference in her child with having a later start time than before.

#### **Julie Plume – CLA parent**

Asked if the ten buses were going to help the a.m. shift at CLA? **McKanna** – Said that there is one bus now at CLA that is consistently getting there between 20 and 25 minutes late – that route is one of the highest priorities for Don Skinner, Transportation Director. Skinner has had to shorten some times, shorten some routes – that route has to be fixed. McKanna hopes to start with the new buses as soon as Monday. Said the District is going to give CLA three routes on the north and three routes on the south. Said that there are some routes that are up to an hour at some of the other schools. There is a lot that has to be done and this (ten buses) is going to make a substantial difference. **Plume** – Wanted to make a comment about changing the bell times even though it doesn't affect her child but it does affect many kids. People who have outside therapies sometimes have a wait time of

six months in order to make a time change and to get a new therapist. She once had to wait six months.

**Millar** – Mentioned the problem with hiring drivers/getting buses.

**McKanna** – Stated that ten new applications for drivers were received by transportation after notices were sent home in children's' backpacks last week. Also commented that one CLA staff member is serious about driving a bus for the District.

\* (Board member Kelly Keenan entered the meeting – approximately 8:05 p.m.)

### **Lisa Traina – CLA parent**

Was going to talk about the change in start times. She spoke with many CLA parents and forwarded her findings to McKanna. Now that she has more time, she will speak with more parents and get their input. The big thing that bothered her about this issue was that 70% of the parents had no idea that there was the possibility of a bell time change and a change would affect so many things like therapies and other kids, other schools. We have to make sure that the parents are aware of what is going on ahead of time. Knows that we will get a lead time before a change, but parents need time to figure this stuff out for themselves. Traina is going to talk to more parents so she can give the Board more details.

### **Patty – St. Theresa and Marion Jordan parent**

Also wanted to discuss the start/finish times. Wanted to ask the Board how we as taxpayers – this \$3,000 a day for buses that was just approved – and you yourself said that it is physically impossible to get from dropping off children at St. Theresa's (Palatine) and then get back to Conyers (in Rolling Meadows) - How are we supposed to know that this is going to work? The start times changed in February, this meeting should have been held last May – not two months after our children have been on the bus. Has one child at St. Theresa and two at Marion Jordan. They are on the bus for extreme amounts of time and the bus is a shuttle. It drops off her son at St. T and goes back to MJ – her children have been waiting there for 20 minutes and are always the last ones to be picked up. Asked how are we going to know that this is going to work?

**McKanna** – Stated that we won't know until Don Skinner, Transportation director has a chance to work with these ten additional routes – it is going to affect a lot more than ten routes. There are still some long routes – this is not going to be a permanent solution. It is primarily to take care of the youngsters that are waiting in the halls of CLA. McKanna was at CLA today to witness it. After the bids for contracting buses come back, the District will be able to share information with the Board and show all the different routes. At the next Board meeting (November 14<sup>th</sup>), there will be a transportation discussion and Don Skinner will be able to share what has been done with these particular routes which will address some of the points that she is making. **Patty** – Asked Skinner if people physically rode the routes, tested them beforehand. Skinner indicated yes. Patty said that in her neighborhood, much more time is needed to maneuver a large bus – she doesn't think that was taken into consideration.

### **Tracey Wrobel – Speaking on behalf of CLA staff members**

Wants to begin by thanking the Board for getting the additional buses. Said that although the Board is not discussing the change in CLA's bell time tonight, she wanted to express some concerns for them to think about before that discussion happens. CLA staff concerns are regarding daycare issues for their children, being late for graduate classes or district committees, being late for second jobs and scheduling therapy appointments not only for their own children but for the children within CLA as some parents already mentioned. There are wait lists for therapists and therapy times are scheduled for the entire year. It would be difficult for those changes to be made. Other concerns for the students would be

daylight savings time – going home in the dark – for children that are 3 or 4 years old that could be a scary thing. Class schedules would be impacted as a lot of CLA students do have autism, their schedules are set for the year. Also some students who are transitioning now, their day is already longer. If they are transitioning to junior high, that makes their day even longer if there is a change to the bell time. **McKanna** – Mentioned that Wrobel surveyed the CLA staff and received about 25 responses. McKanna also met with 30 to 35 CLA staff today to get some firsthand feedback.

### **Amy Rose Rydell – Immanuel Lutheran parent**

Said that if the Board starts to consider an early bell time, she highly suggests that each member, for a week, walk in the kids' shoes. Stand at a bus stop at 6:30 a.m., get shuttled on a bus and see how you like it. Try to function at your job for eight hours, then get back on a bus, ride for an hour and shuttle again. Really thinks that as Board members you have a responsibility to those kids. Try your own routes, it is easier said than done. Actually ride it for a week and you would think twice about setting an early bell time.

### **Steven Merritt – Immanuel Lutheran parent**

Said that he came to the meeting tonight with next to nothing (information) on this topic. He doesn't get the Daily Herald and it is a little troubling to be confronted with something like this that has a great deal of impact on the kids. His two children go to Immanuel Lutheran and said that having the early start in the past had more of a negative impact on them than anything else. He wants the ability to participate in and understand what is going on with this issue. He didn't know anything, heard something about a consultant that was called in and decided that the District should change the bell times. Doesn't know who that consultant is, doesn't know what their considerations were, doesn't know what the facts are – and stated frankly, he should. There should be ample opportunity for everyone to understand why the problems occurred – where the stresses come from. Said that those of us that are impacted by this and pay for it should have an opportunity to participate and have some affect on the outcome. Hopes to be given that opportunity.

**McKanna** – Wanted to mention three points. First, the Daily Herald and also the Pioneer Press were in attendance tonight. Second point is that a summary of the consultant's report is on the District's Web site ([www.ccsd15.net](http://www.ccsd15.net)) – the District is trying to get as much information up there as it can. The Board members get a large packet of information before each Board meeting that includes backup materials. The District is literally putting that information on its Web site before a Board meeting. If you have an opportunity to go on the Internet, check that out. And third, Jennifer Mondy (asked her to indicate where she was in the audience), is a volunteer who literally takes down more than minutes, she does an executive summary of this meeting. It goes in most, if not all, of our PTA newsletters. There is no reason why Merritt couldn't get that information for all of the private/parochial schools. It is a detailed summary of what happens at our Board meetings. McKanna further stated that there are lots of ways to get the information and there are probably others that he hasn't mentioned. **Keenan** – Advised the citizen that he can also put in a request to get a copy of the actual study (consultant's study).

## **Conclusion –**

The meeting concluded at approximately 8:20 p.m.

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