**Special Board Workshop Transportation Reorganization Boone County Board of Education**

March 24, 2014 6:30 PM

Ralph Rush Staff Development Center, Florence, Kentucky

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The Special Board Workshop on Transportation Reorganization of the Boone County Schools Board of Education on March 24, 2014 was called to order by Chairperson Karen Byrd at the Ralph Rush Staff Development Center.

**Attendance Taken at 6:30 PM:**

Present Board Members:

Dr. Maria Brown

Ms. Karen Byrd

Mr. Ed Massey

Ms. Bonnie Rickert

Mr. Steve Templeton

Karen Evans, Board Secretary, recorded the minutes.

**II. PLEDGE TO THE FLAG**

The Pledge to the Flag will be led by Chairperson, Karen Byrd.

**III. TRANSPORTATION REORGANIZATION**

Karen Byrd, Chairperson, opened the meeting with a brief outline of the agenda. Mrs. Byrd stated the meeting tonight is for the board to hear the transportation committee’s recommendations for transportation reorganization and there would be no action taken at the special board meeting, only information gathering. Mrs. Byrd also stated there would be a time for the audience of citizens, as always, and if you wish to speak you may do so and the board would listen.

Dr. Poe, Superintendent discussed the charge to the committee to come up with a reorganization structure and the need to become even more efficient and effective in operations. Dr. Poe discussed we had the opportunity a year ago to hire a new transportation director and during that time we discussed that we wanted to carry on the great tradition that we have in the bus operations. The district operates one of the most efficient and effective operations in the state of Kentucky. At the same time it has grown, the last reorganization pattern of the transportation department was in 2004. Transportation departments around the state and the country have been reorganizing and we wanted to make sure we looked at transportation and make sure we can continue with an efficient and effective operation the best that we can in house. We have looked at others that have always tried to outsource and we have always been lower and cheaper at our particular operation than others and we want to keep it that way, we feel we can do a better job. Dr. Poe stated the Director of Transportation and the Transportation Committee was asked to look at areas in transportations and let the district know where we need to be going, whether that is with the same current operations or moving the operations forward in other directions. Dr. Poe stated tonight is the first time we have heard of the report and heard from the director and transportation areas in the district office. We want to make sure we have a pattern that we think is the most effective moving forward.

Mike Blevins, Chief Operating Officer, stated the transportation department does operate well and the buses are on time etc. He spoke on the APQC process that it became apparent that we duplicate different services. Since we run 4 operations side by side and doing the same jobs with coordinators and dispatchers, we believe there could be a more efficient way of operations. Heather Roth, the new director, was asked to study the department and find ways that we can become more efficient, Mr. Blevins stated he was looking for better supervision of the drivers on the road, being out and seeing what is being done and get things corrected before we needed disciplinary hearings and also to make sure our routing is done in the most efficient manner. Heather has been studying and working with her staff in the office and she has brought to us tonight a plan to operate more efficiently and effectively in the future.

Heather Roth, Director of Transportation, began the meeting with a detailed power point of the current organization and the reorganization charts, which she fully explained to the board. The district has a total of 20,000 students with 17,000 transported, 23 schools and 205 routes, including 3 routers, 3 dispatchers and 4 coordinators. Mrs. Roth reported the organization numbers in 2003 and the numbers from the district growth including the addition of 75 new buses to the fleet and the opening of 5 new schools in the district. Mrs. Roth went over the research included in the reorganization recommendations of comments from administration, surveys from employees on how transportation is doing and what is needed to become more efficient without adding positions. Mrs. Roth reported on the challenges with the current organization which included coordinators that manage employees they never see, accident response challenges, challenge to find policies and procedures along with other challenges. Mrs. Roth described the planning that went into the transportation reorganization process that led to the reorganization for 2014. Discussion on how transportation can extend excellence from the school to the school bus. Mrs. Roth described in great detail the reorganization of the routing, dispatch, safety and training departments and the benefits of the plan. The reorganization implementation process would reduce radio chatter, implement radio expectations and codes, consolidate radio channels, establish routing and dispatch department procedures, provide dispatch training and provide router training.

Mrs. Roth discussed the 2013-2014 accomplishments of the EDULOG SQL upgrade and the changes to EDULOT SQL which will take place during spring break 2014. Other accomplishments reviewed: transportation operations manager “Tom” upgrade, wireless video download, snow and ice procedures, and vehicle maintenance. Also discussed was the driver and assistant manual, department manuals, school’s guide to transportation, student/parent guide to transportation, and special need and preschool student/parent guide to transportation. Mrs. Roth discussed the transportation Team Building Workshop which will take place June 16th -20th, 2014. Transportation has also implemented PBIS teams along with employee recognition programs.

Mike Blevins, stated this recommendations will require no additional staff or funds, there may be allocation exchanges and job description changes that may come before the board. Dispatchers and routers will have technical changes, basically two of the current dispatchers will become routers and two will stay as dispatchers. Mr. Blevins said Mrs. Roth did an excellent job given the guidelines she had to work with. A brief discussion on particular questions the board had followed in clarifying some of the points in the presentation.

**IV. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS**

Brief summary of comments:

Dr. Poe, Superintendent stated that questions brought up tonight will be given to the committee and looked into.

Charles Roberts, Florence, addressed the board on concern of combining spare buses and we have a problem with that now not having enough spare buses now, will the bus drivers need to go to Stephens lot. This is time sensitive and would like the board to take that into consideration.

Mary McCane, Coordinator District 4-Special Needs, spoke on her departments good communication with bus drivers, schools and parents. Ms. McCane further discussed district 4 differences from other districts and is concerned the new organization will not take this into account.

Kelly Brickner, Coordinator of District 3, spoke on concern of communication and all have the fear that special communication and special touch could get lost, , but believes we have a group of professionals that can keep that where it needs to be.

Becky Wilburn, bus driver, discussed concern with 4 radios being taken down to two radios and this will make it crowded, she discussed the need for radios during emergencies and concern of how this may effect drivers. She gave an example of her recent accident and the radio traffic that was completely shut down to address her issue. Ms. Wilburn discussed in detail.

Bob Brown, bus driver, discussed district 4 being a seamless interaction between the employees, and is an excellent model for the district, spoke on hiring quality people, drivers are valuable and need to be treated with respect and know they are an asset. Yes, we need rules to know what is expected and regulation to we can interpret those rules. Excellence comes from relationships and that’s what you need. You can’t know everyone on a rotating schedule…

Dr. Poe, superintendent, to address the question of not feeling valued. I don’t think anything here tonight is about feeling valued, the district spends approximately 6 million to 7 million more on transportation than the state will reimburse. We do have specialized routes and what we want to do is to make sure we can continue. What I think is a misconception here, is the training is out there because we value you as opposed to having rules, regulation and disciplining. I think we can look at things and see if we can determine to move forward, this not about valuing or devaluing, this is about taking the input that we have heard from multiple sources of what is working and what is not working. Special needs transportation is taking up about half of the entire transportation budget, and if we continue to operate as we do in transportation in special needs and we only operate it that way in the entire district we could not afford to operate our own fleets anymore. This would be out of the board’s hands because we would have to look elsewhere the bottom line is we can’t continue to operate this way. We need to look at long term and keeping this in house. We must take an internal look at what is the best for operations and it is not about devaluing it is about valuing the employees and keeping you as Boone County employees. The ultimate goal is keeping this in house for years to come.

Brian Kirby, Burlington, spoke on customer service and asked how 2 people can answer for 4 people and be on the road watching drivers. He doesn’t think this will work and discussed concern.

Vicki Crose, bus driver, spoke on concern of not everyone was talked to in the departments. Is the old way a bad way if it works. Spoke on her sixteen years of experience and spoke on the radio issues.

Dr. Poe stated in response, we have had to take cuts everywhere in the organization, we are not proposing cuts we are trying to keep from doing so. We have not and don’t want to make cuts, but if we stay the same and don’t make changes and what I am hearing is you want more people in the district office that cannot happen. There will still be 4 channels, two channels for drivers and two channels for emergency; there is no decrease in the number of channels. We are 6 million dollars over in transportation and we are not proposing any cuts but we must cut our cuts and we cannot continue to be over budget as we are. District office staff cannot increase so we don’t take away from drivers in the field. Discussion….

Sandra Sipple, bus driver, spoke on concern of transporting special needs students from one end of district to another district. (Dr. Poe discussed the federal law concerning transporting special needs and homeless) Ms. Sipple questioned transporting teacher’s children. Dr. Poe said they would look into it.

John Rachlinski, bus driver, concern of efficiency of the routes. Some students only ride once a month, if that, and he suggested that if they do not ride the bus after a time they be required to fill out new transportation paperwork to get back on the bus. This would enable us to fill up the buses and not lay off bus drivers. Discussion on the bus loads.

Mike Jakes, bus driver, spoke to thank Heather for putting all of this together, who knows if it will work, but don’t separate District 4. Discussion..

Dr. Poe agreed that District 4 is different than District 1, 2, 3, but I do value what District 1, 2 and 3 does also. We will look at district 4, I will not guarantee that it will stay the same, but we will look at it. This is not a done deal. This is the first time we have heard the complete reorganization, we will take a look at the concerns that we are taking into consideration. Discussion…

Barbara Crider, spoke on concern of IC and the problems at the beginning of the year in enrolling of new students. Ms. Crider stated this would be very difficult for 3 people to do all the work. Dr. Poe discussed the problem and the situation at the beginning of the year and will look into the concern.

Paul Dusing, bus driver, spoke on the concern of not having updated rosters, pictures and phone numbers. This would be very helpful to the bus drivers on a day to day basis. He discussed the administration and the frustration because the bus drivers do care. He would like the opportunity for someone to say “ what do you think”.

Dr. Poe, Superintendent, asked if there was a survey done. Mr. Dusing said yes there was, but maybe what I wanted to talk about was not on there. Dr. Poe asked if there was a place to put other information. Mr. Dusing stated yes and he thought he wrote something on the survey about fuel.

Karen Byrd, chairmen, reminded the audience there is a Transportation Advisory Committee does meet monthly and district representatives do bring concerns and issues. Ms. Byrd encouraged the employees to use this avenue to voice their concerns and issues; it was put in place for the employees.

Jerry Hardwood, bus driver, spoke on concern of the destruction of the transportation department. The bus drivers deserve care, respect and to be appreciated. Mr. Hardwood discussed morale being low and everyone needs to take into account the way the bus drivers. He spoke on a letter he sent to Dr. Poe. (Dr. Poe said he discussed the letter with the transportation committee). Mr. Hardwood discussed his experience in the 45 years he has worked…..

Karen Ellis, works with special needs, spoke on the phones not being answered because everyone is always in meetings. Spoke on concern for District 4 and issues that may happen if the new plan is put into place. Ms. Ellis also spoke on the concern of response the dispatchers will be able to give in the new plan.

Dr. Poe, reemphasized this is the first time the board has heard this information; this is not a done deal. We do have approximately 16,000 other children that need to be taken care of too, we will look at District 4. But, if we don’t do anything and we don’t keep our cost in line our cost of operations is will be too high. This board of education has always valued bus drivers. This winter was one of our worst, there is going to be times when I must call a delay versus calling off a day, I do it because I value as professional drivers and can get the job done. We have 5,200 plus employees at this time, not everyone is going to be happy. Last year we had to lay off over 100 employees in the certified area, it is not about not valuing it is about containment of 6 million overage of what the state gives us in transportation. If we don’t make the changes someone else will make those changes for us, we cannot continue to operate like this. The question is what do we do. We have listened and we will take these into consideration. Discussion followed.

Connie Sprayer, spoke on concerns with District 4. Issues that she would like addressed - is releasing children from the bus and the requirement the adult must be seen to release child – there is a good percentage of adult that is not there. Concern of blocking traffic while the departments are trying to contact someone for that child…..

Dr. Poe discussed that upgrading the radios is being looked at. This would be a digital system. Discussion on radios…

Karen Byrd, chairperson, stated that the transportation advisory committees because we do value everyone’s opinion and wanted to create an ongoing avenue for issues to someone that could make a difference. Ms. Byrd expressed how much the board does value our bus drivers and how much the drivers are appreciated. Ms. Byrd encouraged the employees to use the committee which meets the Thursday after the board meeting every month and your district representatives are there and bring issues to the table. Ms. Byrd invited anyone to email her or the board with questions, all the emails are on the district website. Ms. Byrd thanked everyone for coming and listening as they have to the plan.

Dr. Poe, superintendent, announced he would stay after the meeting to discuss any issues the transportation employees may have.

**V. ADJOURN**

1. A motion was made by Steve Templeton, seconded by Bonnie Rickert, to adjourn the meeting. Bonnie Rickert, Karen Byrd, Maria Brown, Ed Massey and Steve Templeton voted, “aye” MOTION: The motion passed 5-0.

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:06 p.m.

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Karen Byrd/Chairperson

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Karen Evans/Secretary