

Bates Middle PTA Minutes

October 24, 2019

Guest Speaker: Les Douglas, Transportation (ldouglas@aacps.org)

- Acknowledgement of trouble
- Good communication with other counties
- AA County far behind in technology
 - Computer routing gives you large problems before it solves anything. Need experience to use it. GIS infrastructure needs to be built, is currently being worked on
 - Seems like a catch-22: can't use software effectively without experience... won't start using it because it's difficult and results aren't good because they lack experience.
 - End of career staff are turning over. New hires have more energy, are building experience.
- Current innovations
 - Map showing walk area is now on Bates school website
 - Addresses shown, so information disseminated better
 - In months, we should have capability for parents to enter address on transportation site and find assigned schools and bus stops
 - Traffic engineer's office determines which streets can be crossed safely. Usually, sidewalks, or < 30mph
 - There was MUCH discussion of the safety of walking routes to Bates. We are invited to contact transportation to notify them of unsafe crossings
 - GPS on some buses, data has been collected and analyzed for some segments. Efficient routing needs to include traffic patterns in addition to speed limits. They are getting more accurate time estimates for bus travel.
 - Starting school later: what's the holdup, and how much money does transportation need to implement later high school times? Les estimates about \$5-8 million/year. Transportation thinks the driver shortage will get worse.
- Consultant investigating transportation office
 - They are understaffed.
 - School start times... consultant has noted that best teaching takes place in early part of day, which conflicts with when students do their best learning.
 - Transportation has not bought into the idea that high schools start too early. "To be successful in today's society, you have to go from early morning to late at night. Changing times is just pushing things around."
- Bus driver shortage
 - AA county is 40 drivers short
 - Good economy results in shortage, according to historic cycles
 - Background checks have slowed the process
 - "Behavior is worse than ever", no one wants to deal with it. Kids today... etc.
 - Bus driver behavior

- Transportation reviews tape after complaints
 - Quiet buses: transportation thinks they are justified, because too much noise makes it too hard to maintain safe driving atmosphere. Kids need to be quiet on the bus is the response from transportation
 - Some children are incorrigible and can't be trained to exhibit good behavior on the bus. (Incorrigible is the exact word used, and defined for us in case we didn't know the meaning.)
 - Drivers shouldn't use brakes as discipline
- Beginning of the year issues
 - Bus stop eliminated in the middle of the day: staffer found child was ineligible for bus and canceled stop immediately. Clearly inappropriate, and shouldn't have happened. Disciplinary issues resulted.
 - Communication with parents needs to be improved, and they are working on it.

Regular business

- Principal's report
 - Deroo has had frustrating experience with transportation. Thinks lack of crossing guards is a big problem for walkers.
 - There's an equity issue with the walking and exceptions. There's a perception that bus exceptions (within 1.5 miles) happen for richer neighborhoods. Minority neighborhoods, like Clay St, don't get the exceptions. Davidsonville and Severna Park do.
 - School can only help with bus discipline with a referral from driver... Not all buses have video.
 - Spirit week has been enthusiastic
 - I asked about hoodies, since kids tried to wear them this week and were reminded about dress code. Many good reasons not to allow them. Kids have perception that they are forbidden because of some association with "gang clothing" but the hoods are more analogous to hats, which also aren't allowed in school.
 - Have a long-term sub for Dr. Vanderbeek, re-assigned band teacher. Leave is indefinite. Principal is aware of unhappy state of band classes and wants to improve the situation. Looking for support for the sub and hoping he can grow into the position... Aware he may have to bring in (another) new person next semester. The county is not displaying urgency on this issue.
 - Number of long-term subs is currently low.
- President's agenda
 - SRO issue is being pushed forward
 - Ray has spoken or written to Sen. Elfreth, Annapolis Mayor's office (Buckley), County Exec (Pittman), Annapolis Education Commission (AEC)
 - Letter published in Capital
 - Meeting on Oct 30 which will discuss this issue

- Jeff Macris, AEC, noted that Bates was 1st school to get a full-time officer, but county had always funded the position. At some point the funding stopped, and now Bates has no officer. Concerned about equity issue that the most economically challenged middle school in the county doesn't have an SRO.
 - Spoke to our county council person, who is not supportive. She doesn't think an SRO is a "magic bullet".
 - Recent episodes at area high schools highlight need for an SRO at Bates
 - Arlotto issued statement about Arundel High incident at homecoming, has noted that system has written protocols for sexual assault, and has made protocols public on AACPS website (student support services section).
 - Annapolis High had an incident and noted their SRO was helpful.
- September minutes approved
- Treasurer: all new income is from membership dues (~\$2000)
- Fundraising
 - Otis Spunkmeyer – no one has stepped forward to lead the effort, although board has not reached out aggressively. This is in part because the board is not enthusiastic about the regular program
 - Instead, there is a different fundraiser with same distributor that has a lower price point and is very popular with schools. Many holiday items that could stimulate interest. Could start campaign by Nov 1. If orders are input before Nov 20, items received before holidays.
 - Need a person/committee to lead
 - Check on Spanish language materials so more of community can participate
 - Bingo night – need a volunteer. Perhaps in conjunction with a dinner, like an International night
 - Raffles
 - 5k run – good spirit builder, not really a fundraiser. The boys & girls club may also have a 5k run. Perhaps we can coordinate.
 - PTA snack table at school movie night, Nov 19, 1630 – 1830. Shannon Pickens volunteered to man the table!
- Extraneous expenses
 - Buy the movie, \$11, for movie night. Grant item.
 - Skittles for mix-match day, \$100, grant item.
- Meeting times
 - Any interest in morning PTA meetings occasionally, including Coffee with the Principal? Yes from attendees.
 - PTA will remind membership about meetings
- No outstanding issues raised
- Meeting adjourned

Attendance

Carl Wheeler

Jeff Macris

Jenn Macris

Alexis Guethler

John Woods

Joanne Linhard

Lisa Lyman

Shannon Pickens

Jaye Falls

Ray Feldmann

JC Johns