

Safe Routes to School Travel Plan Task Force – Meeting Notes: 27 March 2012 (Page 1)

In attendance: Tracy Bull (Chair), Bill Cummings, Principal John Fabrizio, Peter Flood, Mary Frazzetta, Rick Greenier, Officer Rob Kelleher, Jean Mazzerella, Principal Marsha McGill, Leslie Rothman, Sarah Ruffell, Matt Waitkins (NRPC)

Due to an unanticipated use of space conflict in JMUES Room #122, the meeting was moved to the JMUES Main Office conference room. The change of venue was visibly posted on the door at Room #122.

The meeting was called to order by committee Chair Tracy Bull at 3:37pm, and she welcomed the committee membership.

Mrs. Bull made a request for any corrections or clarifications to the draft minutes from the meeting dated 21 February 2012. Seeing none, she requested a motion to accept the minutes as written, made by Mr. Waitkins and seconded by Ms. Mazzerella. The motion carried 10-0-2, with committee members Principal Fabrizio and Mr. Cummings abstaining.

The opportunity was taken to review the informational tables held during parent/teacher conferences at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School (JMUES) on Tuesday, March 20th and Thursday, March 22nd, from 4:00-7:00pm. Committee members Bull, Flood, Frazzetta, Mazzerella, Ruffell and Waitkins, as well as School Board Chair Jody Vaillancourt, each had the opportunity to assist with the informational sessions. Mr. Waitkins stated that the table was situated in the hallway immediately across from the main, triple door entrance at JMUES on both afternoons. This allowed committee members the informal opportunity to extend to parents basic information regarding the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, as well as create an awareness that the SRTS Parent Survey would be coming home with students in early April. He noted that in most instances, it was easiest to welcome parents on their way in and engage them in conversation on their way out. Overall, the information sessions were regarded as a successful undertaking.

Principal Fabrizio inquired whether the committee might employ a similar approach during upcoming conferences at Mastricola Elementary School (MES). Mrs. Bull shared that this was considered during the committee's prior meeting, however, due to the fact that both the SRTS Parent and Student Surveys would be conducted prior to MES conferences taking place, the committee had not made a commitment to do so at the present time. She indicated her willingness to facilitate additional sessions and opportunities as the committee sees fit. It was noted that sharing information with MES and JMUES parent/teacher groups would take place once formal notification of receiving the grant has occurred.

Safe Routes to School Travel Plan Task Force – Meeting Notes: 27 March 2012 (Page 2)

Discussion was held in final preparation for administering the SRTS Student Arrival and Departure Survey as well as the SRTS Parent Survey.

During the March committee meeting, it was agreed that both surveys would take place during the first full week of April, 2012. Principal Fabrizio shared that, due to administrative responsibilities which had arisen in the interim, it would be better to consider a different week so as to allow both he and Principal McGill sufficient time to prepare their staff to administer the Student Survey, as well as compose their cover letter to accompany the Parent Survey.

Principal Fabrizio noted that it has been his experience that materials sent home via students on Thursdays tend to reach parents effectively. It was agreed that the Parent Survey would instead be distributed home during the second week of April, on Thursday, April 12, 2012, with a requested return date the following Thursday, April 19th, 2012, just prior to the week of April vacation. It was agreed that the cover letter would be kept succinct, highlighting key points such as the return date as well as the need for data from all families, no matter how close or far they may reside from the schools. Once composed, Principals Fabrizio and McGill will share their cover letter with committee Chair, Mrs. Bull, for final review. Mr. Waitkins indicated the Parent Survey could be conducted as a homework assignment, with teachers offering a modest incentive. Principals Fabrizio and McGill will explore this option with their staff members. Both principals will prepare materials for their respective buildings, distributing one survey per family where multiple students may exist per household.

The Student Arrival and Departure Survey is typically conducted across three consecutive days during one week, Tuesday through Thursday. Since April 10th is both Election Day as well as a Teacher Workshop day, regular class will not be in session. Therefore, it was decided that survey would be conducted during the third week of April, from the 17th through the 19th.

Once completed, Mrs. Bull will gather survey sheets from both MES and JMUES and turn them over to Mr. Waitkins at the NRPC, where he will enter the data into the National SRTS database.

As a follow-up to the March meeting, the committee held further discussion as to effective communication means and approaches with parents and the community, once formal word as to the grant has been received. The concept of informational tables similar to that undertaken during JMUES conferences was reinforced as a strong, subtle approach. Principal Fabrizio noted the importance and efficacy of face-to-face communication. Mr. Cummings stated that it might be advantageous for the committee to avail local cable access programming, as television outreach in Merrimack can be highly effective. Ultimately, it was agreed that all communication options remain open and will be availed as the committee sees fit as the project unfolds.

Safe Routes to School Travel Plan Task Force – Meeting Notes: 27 March 2012 (Page 3)

Mr. Waitkins described that John Corrigan, Coordinator of the NH DOT SRTS program, offers a PowerPoint presentation of approximately half-an-hour duration that would be beneficial for the steering committee to view. He will provide the necessary contact information to committee Chair, Mrs. Bull, so she may contact Mr. Corrigan and explore scheduling possibilities. He noted that Mr. Corrigan would likely be amenable to an afternoon meeting, so Mrs. Bull will see if he might be available to present during an upcoming meeting. Mr. Flood noted that it would be beneficial for members of the Town Center Committee to view the presentation as well. Once arrangements have been made, Mrs. Bull will see to it that all relevant parties are invited to attend.

Mrs. Bull noted that as a function of his responsibilities at NRPC, Mr. Waitkins would soon be attending a statewide quarterly meeting in Concord. Mr. Waitkins indicated that meeting would occur on April 11th, 2012, at which time our grant application would likely be on the agenda for discussion as one step in the process towards formalization. Given that the Student and Parent Surveys will also be taking place in April, it was agreed that no meeting needed to take place that month. The committee will next meet on Tuesday, May 15th, 2012 at 3:30pm.** Principal McGill will make the necessary arrangements to reserve JMUES Room #122 for the meeting.

Mrs. Bull opened the floor to comments from committee members.

Officer Kelleher inquired whether it might be possible to hold an informational table in the JMUES vestibule on Election Day, Tuesday, April 10th, 2012. While an attractive idea, it was decided to be premature in light of the fact that it would involve broadly addressing the public without formal confirmation of the grant. The previous informational table held during JMUES conferences had been undertaken specifically to provide introductory information while advising parents to expect the Parent Survey and encouraging them to complete and return it accordingly. Future opportunities of this nature may be availed following grant confirmation.

Mr. Flood described the potential benefit of establishing drop-off points, including deceleration lanes, in areas near the JMUES/MES complex, such as on Bishop Street and O'Gara Drive in an effort to relieve some traffic congestion during peak student arrival and release times. It was agreed that this idea would warrant further examination during the development of the travel plan.

Mr. Waitkins noted that he would be out of the office during the week beginning April 16th, 2012.

Mrs. Bull entertained a motion to adjourn, made by Mr. Fabrizio and seconded by Mr. Waitkins. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:15pm.

Approved: May 29, 2012

Safe Routes to School Travel Plan Task Force – Meeting Notes: 27 March 2012 (Page 4)

**The next meeting of the SRTS Travel Plan Task Force has been subsequently rescheduled to Tuesday, May 29th, 2012 in order to accommodate a presentation from the NH Department of Transportation.