

MINUTES

Blue Ribbon Committee Regarding Operational Efficiencies

Thursday, October 28, 2010

Municipal Complex, Conference Room A – 7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Jerry Hejtmanek, Chair, Robert Lister, Kenneth Smith, Rebecca Emerson, Carol Chellman, Kent LaPage, Dana Levenson and Steve Marchand.

Staff Members Present: John Bohenko, City Manager; Ed McDonough, School Superintendent; Steve Bartlett, School Business Administrator; Jon Frederick, Parking Manager, Dianna Fogarty, Human Resources Director, Mary Ann List, Library Director; Kelly Pilgrim; Little Harbour School Librarian, David Moore, Community Development Director; and Valerie French, Recording Secretary

I. Call to Order - Jerry Hejtmanek, Chair

Chairman Hejtmanek called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

II. Approval of Minutes from September 30, 2010

Ms. Chellman moved to approve and accept the minutes from September 30, 2010. Seconded by Mr. Levenson and voted.

III. COAST Routes for School Usage

COAST Executive Director, Rad Nichols and Operations Manager Jeremy LaRose were introduced by Parking Manager Jon Frederick. A current COAST route schedule was presented and explained to the committee.

A general discussion took place about utilizing COAST bus for high school students at least initially as a pilot program. Mr. Nichols stated that COAST is not a pupil transit provider but is a public transit provider. He explained that as a part of the Lafayette Road route, there was consideration given to make sure it could run at a time in the morning to allow high school students to use it to get to the school and there are hourly afternoon trolley runs to the southern portion of the route. He explained that they run their routes on main roads and are not able to adjust their routes specifically to include school drop off locations.

City Manager Bohenko stated there needs to be publicity at the High School to make students aware that COAST transportation is available on Lafayette Road. City Manager Bohenko asked if a student pass could be developed by COAST to incentive more students to ride the bus. Mr. Nichols indicated that the COAST Board would be meeting shortly and it is possible to look into a student pass.

Ms. Chellman stated that there may not be a savings in utilizing COAST for school transportation, but we already invest City funding into that service and it makes sense to increase ridership for dollars already spent. City Manager Bohenko clarified that money comes from parking revenues.

Discussion ensued regarding utilizing more fuel-efficient vehicles and evaluating routes for optimum usage. Jon Frederick stated it is important to keep in mind that COAST receives federal funding and must adhere to fixed routes.

Mr. Lister stated that COAST has always been cooperative with the High School and special needs, but now we are looking at efficiencies, sustainability, etc. and we need to find a way to get students to use mass transit.

Mr. Nichols stated that they will be glad to work with the School Department to get students riding the COAST bus and indicated that he would follow-up directly with the Superintendent and High School principal to look into ways that COAST could increase the visibility of the route at the High School.

IV. Library Services – Schools and Municipal

Public Library Director Mary Ann List and Little Harbour School Librarian Kelly Pilgrim gave an overview of the history and the shared library services currently provided throughout the school system and public library. The shared services include maintenance of the Millennium integrated library system, shared resources, purchasing of resources, students receiving public library cards, etc. Places where there is room for improvement include a delivery system of the shared resources, better access to public library by grade schools and possible reciprocity with other towns i.e., Rye, Newcastle, Newington.

Ms. Pilgrim explained the staffing levels of the school libraries and the different levels of education each librarian possesses.

Councilor Smith asked about the staffing of the school libraries in the summer and if those librarians could be utilized in the public library during those months instead of hiring temporary help. Library Director List stated that they have not hired temporary help for the past three years and have redirected staff usage.

Mr. Marchand stated that the transition from paper to digital is rapid and asked if we are doing anything to anticipate related capital costs i.e., Kindles, for students, etc. Library Director List explained that the changes have been ongoing and they are working to coordinate resources i.e. licensing of periodicals and technology as the public library can license more easily and with less restrictions than the schools.

Ms. Chellman stated that she likes the idea of high school parents being invited to the library to learn how to help their kids do research on the internet and learning that not all information out there is legitimate. She feels that the librarians should continue to brainstorm regularly.

Mr. LaPage stated he likes the down time that reading books provides and hopes that the Dewey decimal system is not dead. Ms. Pilgrim stated it is not dead.

Mr. Levenson encouraged the librarians and their respective departments to formalize the progress they have made in order to ensure accountability going forward and for continued improvement and evaluation.

V. Discussion of Draft Interim Report to City Council on Committee's Work with School Department

City Manager Bohenko reviewed the draft interim report that will be brought to the City Council at a future meeting. After some discussion, it was decided to add today's COAST Bus information, Public Library/school library information and an appendix to list ideas that are outside of the scope of the committee in the final interim report

VI. Discussion of Committee's Next Steps

Chairman Hejtmanek stated the idea of this committee is to make government more efficient in the long-term, which will include negotiations of future contracts with the various groups.

City Manager Bohenko stated that this process has shown that there is already a great level of cooperation between the various City departments and the School Department.

VII. Public Comment

There were no speakers.

VIII. Adjournment

The next meeting will be announced by the Chair at a later date.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie A. French
Recording Secretary