

Monroe County Schools

News Release

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Kevin Weiss, Mike Dixon and Randall Mills, speaking on behalf of Monroe County school bus operators, asked that the Board approve paying drivers an additional 1/7 of their daily pay for any runs that occur during the middle of their work day. This request was made at the regular board meeting held 7:00 p.m. on September 20, 2005, at the Board Office in Union.

Saying that drivers have been adversely affected by the changes in overtime laws, Weiss outlined why board members should agree to paying drivers for work that Superintendent Lyn Guy felt was already included in their eight hour base pay. Weiss said that years ago when the procedure for paying for trips was developed, the Board agreed to pay more than the state minimum of 1/7 of their daily rate for extra duty runs (ball trips, field trips and the like.) Because of that, drivers agreed to give three hours during the day to runs such as trips to the library and short field trips. Now that the Board was “correcting” that procedure, he and the rest of the drivers felt that they should be paid for any run they took during the day.

Superintendent Guy, explained that the Board had been paying drivers over-time for the past 20 years for extra duty runs such as ball games, and that with new changes in the Fair Labor Standard Act, drivers were to be paid over-time only for hours exceeding 40 hours per week, and only for actual work time. In the past, drivers were paid over-time for each day they exceeded eight hours, when in fact they rarely exceeded 40 hours a week. Actual behind the wheel driving time for the average bus operator in the county is less than 2.5 hours, Guy said. The three hours

owed by the drivers finished out their eight hour obligation because years ago drivers were granted five hours per day for their bus runs, no matter how long or short the run actually was.

Board members tabled the item on the agenda until September 27, at which time they would review a proposed policy for trips other than the regular morning and afternoon runs to be developed by the superintendent, as well as a review of practices in other counties across the state. Most runs during the day have been suspended due to fuel shortages but extracurricular trips have continued as have curricular trips, Guy said. She noted that science students at Peterstown Middle School were left at the school because bus operators refused to drive the trip to Bluestone for the river studies scheduled that day. She also noted the need for the Board to act quickly on the issue since drivers needed to know what they would be paid for taking runs other than their regular trips.

During the discussion, Mike Dixon pointed out that drivers are much more vulnerable than any other employee in the school system should a student bring a weapon to school. “Teachers and other folks have lots of help in an emergency,” he said, “but we’ve got sixty kids on a bus and can be attacked without anyone to help.”

Weiss said that drivers are on call during the day in case of inclement weather, floods and the like. He said when teachers leave school for the day, their job is over. Heated discussion occurred when Board Member Ed Pell stated that the day didn’t end at 3:40 for most teachers that they carried work home to complete and were called on for other duties after school and evenings. Marvin Dixon, a James Monroe teacher, said that what teachers do after 3:40 is their decision but that they don’t have to do work at home.

Mike Dixon also said that other counties were paying the rate they were requesting and

that drivers weren't asking for anything extreme, but what is fair. "We get kids to and from school safely," he said, "why does it matter whether we put in an eight hour day or not?"

Randall Mills said that drivers understood the change in the federal law, they understand the Board's need to save money, and he understood that the drivers' safety records were appreciated. "If we are appreciated," he said, "do what's right and give us what is fair."

Under Public Comments, Bob Garland told the Board that he wanted to buy the Greenville School in order to bring in up to 25 jobs to the county. He complained that he hadn't been able to meet with the Greenville Community Organization that manages the building but that they weren't doing anything with the property. He said the property is in shambles: the roof is leaking onto the gym floor, the pipes in the kitchen are broken and the grass hasn't been mowed. He said he could guarantee that the building would be brought back to standards and soccer could play free on the fields, which would be maintained by the group running the businesses to go there.

Superintendent Lyn Guy responded that the Board no longer owned the building and could therefore not sell the property. She suggested that Mr. Garland write a letter to the organization, asking to meet with them. When he said he didn't know who was on the Board, she said that the names of the officers were always reported to her and that information was kept on file. As a non-profit organization, the group was required to meet certain criteria to maintain that status. She suggested that if there was a proposal for improving the facility, that proposal would necessarily have to include the current owners, not the Board of Education.

Mrs. Deede Lundeen, new special education director for Monroe County Schools, introduced herself and thanked Board members for the opportunity to work in Monroe County.

A grandparent, Carol Keaton, requested permission to speak to the Board in executive session concerning disciplinary action taken against her grandson. Following the brief executive session, the Board took up New Business and approved budget supplements, transfers, and paying the bills as presented.

Several out of state trips were approved: A request from Christy Parker, Principal, that a team of teachers and administrators from James Monroe High School be allowed to attend a workshop in Charlottesville, VA, Oct. 16-18, on improving the 9th grade was granted, as was a request from Jhanna Lively and Linda Terry to attend the National Head Start Home-Based Conference in Gatlinburg, TN, Sept. 27-29. Superintendent Lyn Guy was granted permission to attend an education forum in Denver, CO, for individuals named as Superintendent of the Year from all 50 states, Oct. 20-22.

The following personnel decisions were approved: Bob Pomphrey's retirement, effective November 30, as well as his placement as a substitute teacher; Laura Powell was hired as Title I Parent Coordinator; Susan McGlothlin was granted maternity leave to extend through the first semester; Amanda Weikle was approved as a volunteer for Mountain View School; Bert Ellison was transferred, per his request, to the Kibble Hill bus run; Rebecca Allen was transferred from substitute to the Hans Creek bus run.

The following aides were transferred or hired: Amy Meadows, transferred to Head Start Aide/Home Visitor, Peterstown Center; Delores Dempsey, half-time special education aide at Mountain View; Drema Settle, temporary special education aide, Peterstown Middle; Roberta McMahan, Head Start bus aide, Union Center; and Laurie Massie, Head Start bus aide, Union.

Other employment included Sandra Humphries, test coordinator, Mountain View;

Paulette Kirby, Libby Kowalsky, \$1 assistants for cheerleading at Mountain View; John Mustain, Baseball Coach, Mountain View; Steve Ballangee, Assistant Baseball; Michael Hines, substitute teacher; Lorie Neal, substitute teacher; Kathy Kirk, substitute cook; and Lisa Coburn, temporary secretary, Mountain View School.

In final personnel action, the Board approved an additional clerk position for the financial office, with details about the posting to be worked out by the superintendent.

Under Discussion and Information, the Board discussed the football field at James Monroe and the date of the first October meeting. The meeting adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

The next regular meeting has been moved to Oct. 10, 2005, 7:00 p.m. at the Board Office in Union.