

NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & NEIGHBORHOODS
DATE: APRIL 23, 2019
TIME: 7:03 P.M.
PLACE: CASMIR PULASKI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – 1097 BRALEY ROAD, NEW BEDFORD, MA

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS BRIAN GOMES, CHAIRMAN; NAOMI CARNEY; HUGH DUNN; SCOTT LIMA; WILLIAM BRAD MARKEY; LINDA MORAD

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS DEBORA COELHO, VICE CHAIRPERSON; IAN ABREU; MARIA GIESTA; JOSEPH LOPES; DANA REBEIRO

* * *

Councillor Gomes called the Public Safety Committee Meeting to order and took attendance. The Clerk read Communications from Councillors Debora Coelho, Ian Abreu, Maria Giesta, Joseph Lopes and Dana Rebeiro explaining their absences. These Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Dunn.

* * *

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Gomes, Oliveira and Abreu, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods meet with Pulaski School Parents and School Staff in conjunction with the Far North End Neighborhood Association, to discuss the ongoing traffic and public safety issues at Pulaski school and that the Administration look into funding for two (2) traffic guards during drop off and pickup times at said school further requesting, that this Committee Meeting be held at the Pulaski School to get Parents and School staff input (To be Referred to the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods.) (Ref'd 3/23/17) (4/18/17-tabled; forward the list provided by Mrs. Tavares to the School Committee, DPI and the City Council, from the Committee, explaining that the attached are possible short- and long-term solutions to the traffic congestion and student safety issues as they relate to the Pulaski School.) (4/26/17-letter and list forwarded to all contacts outlined above); and a COMMUNICATION, Councillor Gomes, submitting an email from Lisa Tavares, concerned parent of a student at Pulaski School, regarding the traffic issues at the school. (To be Referred to the Committee on Public Safety and Neighborhoods.) (Ref'd 3/23/17) (4/18/17-tabled; forward the list provided by Mrs. Tavares to the School Committee, DPI and the City Council, from the Committee, explaining that the attached are possible short- and long-term solutions to the traffic congestion and student safety issues as they relate to the Pulaski School.) (4/26/17-letter and list forwarded to all contacts outlined above) were removed from the table and received and placed on file by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Carney. (1, 1a)

Councillor Markey thanked those in attendance for coming to the meeting and expressed the importance of resolving the traffic issue at Pulaski.

8.

Lisa Tavares, 7 Jessica Lane, expressed concern that this issue has been going on for the last two years, since this Committee last met at Pulaski School to address them originally. She reiterated many of the same concerns. The primary issue seemed to be bus drop off and cars that drop off students. She expressed the need for the school to open earlier with the help of Para Professionals. If the school was open earlier then the children could be dropped off earlier than they are now. The early drop off in place now, has the students being dropped off at 8:15 and the children are escorted and watched in the cafeteria. She also called for a Crossing Guard, that can direct traffic. It is also noted that buses dropping off students at the school appear to be half full; it may be worth looking at having a pick up and drop off area that students could fill those buses and be transported to the school.

Councillor Gomes announced the presence of Captain Costa from the North End Police Department, School Committee Members Joshua Amaral and Christopher Cotter and Andrew O'Leary, Business Manager for New Bedford Public Schools.

Carol Strupczewski, 1075 Braley Road, expressed her concerns about the traffic issues and mentioned the need of an additional entrance to the school, perhaps through the park that abuts the school property.

Mrs. Rego, Principal of Pulaski School, explained that many of the requests from the original meeting have been executed. They now have an earlier open time then they originally had; they have three paid Para Professionals who assist with the early open time. The issue of parents not following the drop off instructions are a major problem.

Marcel Trahan, 46 Christopher Court, explained his frustration that this meeting was being held, that it appears that they met two years ago on the same things and nothing has happened to address the traffic issue. He did not believe anything would come of this meeting and pointed out that half of the neighborhood did not show up to this meeting, because they feel the same way.

Paul Macaroco, 1046 Pequot Street, stressed traffic is the issue, the cars fly up and down Braley Road with no concern for the children going to and from the school; safety does not appear to be a priority.

Virginia Vreeland, 43 Christopher Court, echoed the same concerns and she is worried about the children and their safety.

Ron Cabral, 67 Blaze Road, said an additional egress or ingress would solve the traffic issue and no parking on one side of Braley Road would help as well.

Melissa Bourque, 81 Briarwood Drive, told the Committee that there are signs directing vehicle traffic, but the parents do not follow it. If enforced this would alleviate clogging. Another issue is the flashing traffic light flashes all day, so people just ignore it.

Kelly Russo, 21 Seth Daniel Drive, believes changing the restrictions for busing, then there would be more students riding the bus and this would solve the issue. In the winter, walking to school is a challenge because the sidewalks are not shoveled and sometimes it is icy and very dangerous for students or anybody to walk.

Gilly Safioleas, 24 Felton Street, expressed his concern that this Committee met two years ago on this issue and nothing has come of it, that it seemed to have fallen on deaf ears, but now that it is an election year it is being brought up again. The main issue is the safety of the children.

Councillor Morad asked Principle Rego to explain the drop off time and she told the Committee that early arrival starts at 8:15, if parents are walking their children to the door the children can enter the building and proceed to the cafeteria; the reason why the children that arrive on the bus at 8:15, are not allowed to enter the school until 8:30 is because the Para Professionals don't start until 8:25. The school day actually starts at 8:45.

Andrew O'Leary, School Business Manager told the Committee that the School Department would consider the pickup and drop off bus sites for those buses that are not filled.

Councillor Markey suggested that perhaps staggering the bus arrivals may help the issue.

Councillor Dunn suggested that a crossing guard would help to alleviate some of problems.

Tony Tavares, 7 Jessica Lane, stated the drop off is chaotic. The issues are that the parents don't care, some parents dropping off their children don't care.

Jeff Tetreault, NBPS Transportation Director, was asked if it costs more money to have a full bus and he said no. They can look at group bus stops as a possibility. He explained the time schedule for drop-off of buses and vehicles. The cost to operate a full bus in the city is \$55,800.

Captain Paul Da Costa acknowledged that they need help at the school to obey the traffic rules. He has video of the drop off that is taking place and it is a concern. He stated there is enough room for eight (8) buses in the parking lot. He stated that his department has used nearly two hundred-man hours in helping to direct traffic at the school. He believes a separate ingress or egress would help to solve some of the issues.

Manny Silva of DPI told the Committee they have plans for an additional egress which would come off from Manilla Street and the cost would fall between \$225 to \$350,000. They have built some sidewalks on the north side of Braley Road from the school entrance to the Avenue and they have painted the crosswalks.

Councillor Carney suggested turning the abutting park into a parking lot for buses that this may help with the issue as well.

Brittany Furtado, 118 Greenbrier Drive, stated the issue was the parents not following the drop off instructions. She told the Committee that she has witnessed the Para Professionals being verbally assaulted by parents during the drop off process. No one is out there to enforce the drop off rules. Parents not following the rules are the major problem.

10.

School Committee Member Josh Amaral was present and supports administrations fixes and he too believes it comes down to enforcement of drop off guidelines.

Councillor Gomes asked Andrew O'Leary and Jeff Tetreault how long it would take them to review the ingress issue and group drop off and pick up and provide the Committee with a status, it was decided forty-five (45) days may be appropriate.

On motion by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Markey, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter for 45 days. This motion passed on a voice vote.

Councillor Carney made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Markey.

This meeting adjourned @ 8:56 p.m.

ATTEST:



Denis Lawrence, Jr.,
Clerk of Committees