



Catherine O'Brien  
District Clerk  
(518) 664-5727 Ext. 2203

**MECHANICVILLE**  
**CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Jodi A. Birch  
Business Manager  
(518) 664-5727 Ext. 2200

Bruce Potter  
Superintendent of Schools

September 20, 2019

Dear Mechanicville Community,

In support of our district communication goal, I'm writing to provide rationale to some recent decisions voted on by our Board of Education (BOE).

Upon my arrival to the district on July 15, there were a couple of open items that required follow-up by the BOE policy committee. The first was the districts transportation policy as there had been a request to reconsider the mileage limit on transportation provided for students attending schools out of district (no change to special education students). The second was the need to update our facility usage policy and subsequent fee schedule for our new exhibition field.

Transportation:

The existing transportation protocol in the District Transportation Handbook follows the State Education Department guidelines for central school districts, (provide transportation to non-public and parochial schools within 15 miles of the student's residence).

After thorough investigation and discussion with the school district attorney we learned that as a "City" school district we are not required to provide transportation to students. If the BOE decides by a majority vote to provide transportation to students, it must provide the same transportation to all students, whether attending our public school or any non-public or parochial school within the same limits.

Mechanicville has provided transportation for its students for as long as anyone can remember. What we are therefore required to do is provide it equally. Meaning, to transport students to any school within our district borders. Currently those schools include the Mechanicville Elementary School and the Jr/Sr HS, as well as St. Augustine Academy.

The district currently transports 26 students (district residents) to non-public and/or parochial schools. This annualized cost is \$126,000, of which the district will receive 77.4% in state aid next school year in reimbursement for this expense - \$97,524 translating into a net cost the following year of \$28,476.

We have many needs to support the students attending the Mechanicville schools and the teachers and staff working for our district. Applying the \$126,000 toward other aid generating programs or services to support our goals in improving district outcomes was the only motivation and main conversation point discussed by the Policy Committee. The full committee decided to recommend amending the existing policy and bring to the BOE for public reading and ultimate vote on September 5. The vote passed by a 5-1 margin. The school administration will be considering a variety of programs and services to support student outcomes from BOCES which generates 64.1% in state aid, a reimbursement amount of \$80,766. In the end it was about how best to allocate similar money. No one on the committee, nor the board, objects to the choice of families to send their children to a different school or to home school. Ultimately, we are accountable for the outcomes of the students attending the district, and felt the resources should be spent supporting our students.

### Facility Usage

With the addition of the new Exhibition Field, the district is in need of updating our facility usage policy as there is now more interest from outside organizations to utilize our facilities. There has NOT been any proposed policy change for public reading as of yet. There has been preliminary discussion regarding a 3 tiered approach, similar to other neighboring districts. The tiers represent:

1. School District programs
2. Mechanicville community sponsored programs
3. Outside or other organizations

There will be further discussion of the tiers and potential proposed policy at the next Policy Committee meeting which is scheduled for 4:00pm on Thursday, September 26 in the District Office Conference Room.

The policy committee was asked to propose a field use fee in the interim because there was a request by the Jr. Red Raiders to use the Exhibition Field for the fall season, and Section 2 athletics for Sectional Soccer games. The committee requested of the business office the actual costs of operating the scoreboard and the cost of a custodian on a weekend. The hourly expense was brought to the BOE for vote on August 1st. The recommendation was not to upcharge the Jr. Red Raiders, just to pass along costs to the district as we are not authorized to use district funds for a community organization unless earmarked in our annual approved budget. The BOE voted 7-0 to approve the hourly fee. Historically the Jr. Red Raiders have never been charged by the district to use the field, but prior the district did not need to provide a paid scoreboard operator, so no additional out of pocket expenses were incurred by the district.

Since that time, the district provided scoreboard training to members of the Jr. Red Raiders organization to eliminate the need for the district to provide a paid scoreboard operator, therefore eliminating that expense.

I'm very sincere in my commitment to open communication and transparency. To that end, we are in the process of revamping our district website, included in that will be the addition of a platform provided by ClearGov. This will provide all district financial information as well as student outcome information. This data will be able to be compared to similar schools or cohorts of schools as a measure of accountability and comparable performance. Stay tuned!

My best,



Bruce