

Coffee Hour - 9/6/2019

FA Announcement

Sign ups for volunteers and newsletter
Ice Cream Social tomorrow 3-5 at the school
School Store closing Monday 9/9
Savers fundraiser

Q & A

Bus/Dismissal

What happens if the a bus arrives to its stop early? Should the bus wait at least until its scheduled time to arrive?

Kathy – says the bus company instructions are to arrive and stay for five minutes and then leave. Parents are asked to arrive to five minutes before the bus is supposed to arrive.

Fence/Property Access

Parent question regarding the fence at the mall and whether there is a safety concern.

Kathy provided history regarding the fence/mall

- School opened in 2007 and was in a different location in South Amherst.
- School moved in to current building in 2008 and there was no fence.
- When the school renovated a portion of the building, there was a perceived threat on the part of some parents of people entering the school yard from the Mall and the bike trail; cut down a bunch of bushes and put up the perimeter fence. Also had two gates put in. At that time the relationship with the Mall was amicable. Mall gave permission for the emergency gate and are continuing to honor that agreement. Mall did ask permission from the Fire Department to put up the new gate across the emergency exit.
- The Mall only began to have concerns in the past couple of years when the volume of traffic increased causing customers to be unable to park. Also, a small number of PVCICS parents began to park illegally in the fire lane and unsupervised children causing liability concerns.
- Mall would ask PVCICS to send reminders, those were only helpful for brief periods. Then the Mall put up signs.
- The school first learned of the fence from the Hadley Fire Department.

The school does have the combination to the lock on the emergency gate.

There was also an incident last year in which a Mall customer drove into the PVCICS fence, maybe that contributed to the Mall's decision to put up the fence.

Follow-up fence question:

Does the school have an open conversation with the Mall about the shared boundary – was there any conversation?

Kathy/Richard answer:

Mall owner is in Boston and is a real estate firm. Typical communication is generated by the lawyer for the Mall and comes in the form of cease and desist type notices. There is no ongoing, open dialog. There is no sense on the part of the school administration that the Mall is interested in having a conversation, but also characterized the Mall as historically having been supportive of the school.

There is some desire to talk to Mall owners to provide options for high school students, but at this point the school feels like it is on the school and parent community to rebuild bridges.

School is also looking for other options. One long-term solution is that there are plan to rebuild Rt 9 eventually and that those plans include putting in sidewalks on both sides. That work should be happening in about two years.

The school is taking the blame for any efforts to avoid using the Mall. So far, two of the six days of school there has been an officer from Hadley trying to help deter use of the Mall parking lot.

The back is officially wetlands so the school is not allowed to build a path to the bike path without approval of the local Conservation Commission to change the school property and the state DCR, which owns the bike path, to approve an access point. Kathy has also looked into trying to install a nature-trail type boardwalk. The school has asked the school site planner to help it gain access to the bike path. This process has only just begun. The school has especially high burdens for complying with regulations because the funding source (USDA) for the renovation/addition required.

Bottom line is that the school administration is asking parents to behave responsibility and blaming parents for the fact that things have deteriorated with neighbors.

The school admin believes it is in compliance with all state school regulations related to safety and otherwise.

Early Dismissal and Study Hall Access

What are high school students supposed to do if their ride is not there on time? Parent indicated that high school students have been told that they cannot leave school property (because there is no safe way) and also that they cannot stay on school property.

Kathy

Encourages parents not to be late and to communicate with school if you will be late. That telling students they need to leave the campus is common.

Dorothy Hartman

There is work happening to establish a study hall for the period from 3:30 to 4:15.

Kathy

For elementary school there is no study hall. The schedules were changed for the elementary grades to prevent loss of instructional time. The changes for this year have not decreased instructional time.

Parent question

Do middle school students who ride an early bus get a study hall? Teachers tell students to seek extra help during study hall. What is being done to make sure that teachers know that not all students have study hall?

Dorothy Hartman

She is soliciting questions directly from the students. The middle school team is aware of this problem and knows that it needs to work that out? There is no proposed solution at this time yet. Maybe some of these options will be addressed during the weekly advisory time.

Kathy

Very happy that so many people have signed up the shuttle. On any given day during the last few years thirty to forty kids per day were leaving school early to attend extra-curricular activities.

Richard

Different parents have different priorities and the school is trying to support both priorities. The timing of study hall was to facilitate kids who need to participate in off-site extra-curricular activities.

Capacity

Kathy

The school projected that it would outgrow the building five years ago. If the school had previously been approved for the expansion, the school would have had the future projected revenue to be able to get financing to purchase another site. If/when there is an expansion approved, the school will purchase another site and half the students will move to a different site. Without the expansion, there will continue to be space/capacity issues, but the school is confident that with creativity and continued support the school will be able to continue to grow and serve the students.

Richard and Yoko have moved off-site to free up more instructional/administrative space. The key things that are important are teachers, students, and parents – not the physical space.

Communication

There is a lack of official communication from the school and improving that would go a long way in helping the parent community better understand and support the school. When there is official communication from the school, it will circumvent the miscommunication and misunderstandings.

Kathy

The school is in the process of redesigning its website.

Also, asked should the monthly principal conversation time be changed to a different time – like after school.

Parent providing examples of communication issues:

Email re: transportation

Only sent via email

No indication that spaces on the shuttles would be limited

No notice that car line pick-up meant that it would be over an extended time, not just 3:45 to 3:50.

Kathy

There was a team of folks who took other efforts, including phone calls, to contact specific families. There is clearly room for improvement. Encourage parents to call or contact the school if they have questions.

Elementary Recess

Parent of second grader has concerns about removal of afternoon recess. Has received several different schedules and is unsure what is happening.

Kathy – there is still a teacher-directed afternoon recess

Rafters Bus Stop

Parent is asking that school provide more information about how the school plans to deal with the dispensary plans.

Kathy

Target reneged on the bus stop just three days before school was set to start. Public safety personnel recommended the stop at Rafters and Kathy has been told it will take about two years for the dispensary to open. Kathy asks the parents to build a social contract. Parents need to be on-time to pick up from bus stops and this is especially an issue with respect to older students who are not picked up on time and then go into business. Business owners do not like unattended minors.