

Discovery High School
Governing Board Meeting Minutes
05/20/2025

The following members were present:

Kevin Warren	President/Treasurer
Nancy Daley	Chairperson/Community Member
Charlotte Butler	Community Member
John Taylor	Community Member
Doretha Tillman	Community Member
Terry Gier	Community Member
Tania Sims	Secretary

Mrs. Nancy Daley welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 11:40 AM.

Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Terry Gier to accept the 04/22/2025 minutes as written. Ms. Charlotte Butler seconded the motion. The motion was passed by unanimous vote.

Stakeholder

Ms. Montee Harrell & Ms. Cynthia Daniels raised operational concerns regarding current "hub stop" routes.

1. Reported Issues

A. Route Deviations:

- **Ms. Harrell:** Drives 2 miles beyond the 10-mile radius to transport 7 students.
- **Ms. Daniels:**
 - One stop is 4 miles outside the 10-mile limit.
 - Logs 300 extra miles/month due to hub stops.
 - Three stops extend near Bartow, causing:
 - 20-minute delays for middle school students awaiting pickup.

Board Approved
6/24/25
Date

B. Ridership Issues:

- High school students frequently skip buses or transfer schools, worsening inefficiencies.

Ms. Newman confirmed all hub stops fall outside the 10-mile radius from school campuses.

2. Proposed Solutions

A. Hub Stop Relocation (Ms. Harrell):

- **Current Problem:** Hub concept works, but location is inefficient.
- **Proposal:** Move hub closer to Eagle Lake (near Highway 17).
 - **Benefits:**
 - a. Faster loop-in/out for drivers.
 - b. Reduces delays for the last two buses.
 - c. Lowers nonstop routing pressure.
 - d. Cuts driver detour time.
 - e. Maintains service quality.

B. Consolidated Pickup (Ms. Harrell):

- Merge stops for students from Eagle/Eloise into one central hub.
 - **Advantages:**
 - Reduces redundancy.
 - Saves time (current stops take 7–10 minutes each, per timed tests).

3. Administrative Response & Discussion

- **Mrs. Daley:** Asked if new routing software would optimize hub stops.
 - **Mr. Frabotta:**
 - Expressed optimism about the software's potential.
 - Noted he and Mr. Warren met with Ms. Newman to redistribute routes more equitably.
- **Mrs. Daley:** Proposed reviewing hub stop efficiency for next year's implementation.

4. Additional Concerns (Ms. Harrell)

A. Route Imbalance:

- **Example 1:** Must drive Highway 17 to drop off one student, while another bus idles at school after completing 75% of its route.
- **Example 2:** Middle school buses wait unnecessarily at the back gate after high school drop-offs.

B. Solutions Suggested:

- Redistribute stops evenly among drivers.
- Assign local-area staff to optimize routes.

C. Context:

- New software is untested, but core issue = geographic disparity (not student needs).
- Current logistics waste time + fuel.

5. Experience-Based Recommendations (Ms. Harrell)

- Proposed alternative Eagle Lake stop locations for efficiency.
- Stressed need for administrative support to:
 - Evaluate new stops.
 - Implement adjustments.

Mrs. Daley requested Ms. Harrell formalize suggestions and share with Ms. Newman & Mr. Jemison, Mr. Frabotta and Mr. Warren for next year's planning.

6. Driver Equity Concerns (Ms. Harrell)

- **Seniority Disregard:** Veteran drivers feel their experience is overlooked.
- **Unbalanced Assignments:** Newer drivers allegedly refuse certain routes (e.g., high/middle school), leaving senior staff overburdened.

Mrs. Daley expressed appreciation to Ms. Harrell and Ms. Daniels for sharing their concerns. She noted that with a new full year ahead, the board has some time to review the matters discussed.

Mr. Jemison advised Ms. Harrell and Ms. Daniels that if any issues arise with the route, they should notify him directly. He assured them he would meet with them to address the situation.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Frabotta requested that Ms. Vignale be excused from the meeting due to personal reasons. Ms. Vignale will be unavailable to conduct the scheduled line-item analysis of financial statements for board review.

Mr. Jemison provided an overview of DHS's financial statements, emphasizing the following key points:

- 1. Current Challenges:**
 - DHS is below target on its service ratio and cash-on-hand metrics.
 - The FY budget has been significantly reduced to essential expenditures only ("bare bones") to facilitate financial recovery.
- 2. Cost-Cutting Measures:**
 - Reductions include position eliminations, purchasing freezes, and operational cuts.
 - Goal: Stabilize finances to fulfill obligations without jeopardizing both schools or broader operations.
- 3. Forward Outlook:**
 - Cuts are temporary, with plans to restore resources as conditions improve.
 - Focus remains on long-term corrective actions to address persistent issues.

Mr. Jemison highlighted enrollment as an ongoing concern but expressed cautious optimism about recent progress. Key points included:

- 1. Transportation Policy Impact:**
 - Acknowledged that the previous transportation decision adversely affected high school enrollment more than anticipated.
 - Noted recovery efforts have been slower than expected but are now showing positive trends through targeted recruitment.
- 2. Current Enrollment Status:**
 - DHS budget baseline: 900 students.
 - Current FOCUS system count: Exceeds 900 (goal: 925).
 - Anticipated summer attrition due to transfers and collegiate program transitions.
- 3. Forward Focus:**
 - Emphasized continued recruitment efforts to stabilize enrollment.

- Stressed alignment between enrollment targets and long-term budget sustainability.

Mrs. Daley noted that during the last meeting, Mr. Jemison had inquired about funding for sports programs. She asked whether space had been allocated in the budget for such initiatives this year.

Mr. Jemison responded that DHS does not currently plan to implement this for the upcoming school year (2025–26) but is considering it for the 2026–27 academic year.

Mrs. Green mentioned that she and Mr. Jemison have been discussing fundraising efforts with the coaches. The teams require a specific amount of funding for the upcoming season, particularly for larger celebrations and travel expenses.

She noted that many may not fully realize the high costs associated with transportation, as DHS lacks on-site facilities (such as fields and a track), requiring teams to travel for games and meets. These logistical and financial challenges have become clearer through recent discussions with the coaches and athletic director.

Mr. Warren shared that Discovery School maintains a debt reserve fund, with its earnings reverting to the fund balance. He noted that the board has limited familiarity with this process, as they have not been directly involved in its management.

The individual responsible for managing and investing these funds will present on June 3rd to provide details on:

- The fund's current operations,
- Investment strategies, and
- Future outlook.

Principal's Report

Mr. Jemison stated that Discovery High School currently has 860 students. He also shared an update on open enrollment: DHS has accepted and secured commitments from 251 incoming 9th-grade students, 13 for 10th grade, 4 for 11th grade, and 5 for 12th grade. Additionally, DHS is accepting another 15 ninth-grade students.

Mr. Jemison reported that DHS currently projects over 900 students for the upcoming school year, though we anticipate losing approximately 30-40 students from this count. Our current committed enrollment stands at:

- 267 ninth graders
- 14 tenth graders
- 5 eleventh graders
- 7 twelfth graders

As historically observed, our upperclassmen numbers (11th-12th grades) remain smaller since students at that level are typically less inclined to transfer. Our primary focus for growth remains on attracting 9th and 10th graders.

To maintain target enrollment numbers, we are considering accepting an additional 25-30 ninth graders to offset anticipated attrition. DHS aims to begin the academic year with 925 students.

Mr. Jemison stated that DHS is still awaiting final confirmation regarding Title I reallocations. He noted that the district frequently experiences periods where they need to finalize allocations and determine which schools should be included. Currently, DHS appears to be among those schools still under consideration.

Mr. Jemison explained that Title I funding is currently allocated to support:

- Partial salaries for our academic coaches
- Counseling staff positions
- Title I personnel
- Additional program support services

Old Business

Ms. Jemison presented the DHS bell schedule changes. Mr. Jemison explained that a primary reason for the adjustment was to address Mr. Frabotta's concerns regarding transportation logistics, specifically to provide drivers with additional time for return routes.

Both parties agreed to move forward with modifying the schedule to accommodate this need.

Mr. Warren presented a summary of the Conflict-of-Interest policy to the board, covering:

1. Policy Overview
2. Board Member Obligations
3. Implementation

Action Taken:

- All board members signed the Conflict-of-Interest acknowledgment form, affirming their understanding and adherence to the policy.

Mr. Jemison reported that DHS is currently soliciting bids for custodial services, indicating a potential change in vendors for the cleaning crew.

Mr. Jemison enthusiastically shared two important upcoming events for DHS seniors:

1. **Senior Awards Ceremony**
 - Date: Tonight
 - Time: 6:00 PM
2. **Graduation Ceremony**
 - Date: Sunday, May 25th
 - Time: 3:30 P.M.

Mr. Jemison distributed formal invitations to all board members for both events.

The meeting was adjourned by Nancy Daley at 11:25 A.M.

Next Meeting: June 24, 2025
Discovery Academy of Lake Alfred
Media Center at 9:15 A.M.