

CHAPTER FIVE

TRANSPORTATION

“In the early twenties, children living in the west end attended school at District 13, 24 and Elmont District 16. To get to these schools, they had to walk two miles. There were no school buses and seldom did the students get to ride to school.

“In 1922, the joint School Boards of District 13 and 24 proposed the following: That two schools be built, one in each district, or that a new district be formed and a new school be erected for the exclusive use of the children living in the new district.

“After much discussion, it was presented to the District Superintendent of Schools, Wellington C. Mephram, after his own investigation, made an order establishing School District 30.”¹

The above summary of the creation of Common School District Thirty shows that concerns over pupil transportation is as old, if not older than the district. As early as the seventh meeting of the newly created Board of Education a petition on bus service was presented:

The clerk was authorized to notify the Ormonde Civic Association that the Board would not be able to undertake the proposition of bus transportation for children during the coming year.²

A petition signed by 76 persons residing on various east and west street, north of Merrick Road, and westward from the school to Ocean Avenue, was presented to the Board requesting bus service for children.

Following discussion on this question the Board agreed to obtain an estimate as to the cost of the service and include it in the new budget to be voted on in August.³

¹ History of Valley Stream 1840-1975, by Howard Ruehl at 33.

² District 30 Board Minute Books, May 1, 1930.

³ *Ibid.*, June 5, 1930.

The “clerk reported, [at the July 1, 1930 meeting,] that he had conferred with the Bee Bus Line Inc. regarding bus service and that a figure of \$1800 had been submitted to convey children from the northwest part of the district to the school.” This was included in the budget that was approved in August of that year and thus bus transportation was established for the first time during the 1930-31 school year. This was short lived, as the budgets from 1931 to 1934 did not include transportation.

In 1933 a delegation from the North West Valley Stream Civic Association petitioned the board for transportation. This petition contained about 86 names.⁴ The president responded that all the board could do is let the taxpayers vote on the proposition at the next annual meeting. This was done and the proposition passed by nineteen votes.⁵ Probably due to the hard economic times the issue of transportation was from then on never included in the budget. It was dealt year by year through separate propositions.

A bus transportation proposition was defeated in 1934 so another proposition containing 180 names was presented to the board on June 19, 1934. This time the board responded with this resolution:

WHEREAS, the Board is at all times governed by the opinions of the voters as expressed at the Annual Meetings of the District, a motion was made and carried that the petition for bus service be denied inasmuch as it was defeated at the Annual Meeting of May 1, 1934 by a majority of 92 votes, the vote being 123 against and 32 for.

⁴ *Ibid.*, March 7, 1933.

⁵ See also Public Education in Valley Stream, *Supra* note 2, Volume VI District Thirty History, Appendix VI contains all transportation propositions.

A “Bus Committee” of residents was formed who promptly petitioned the Commissioner of Education. Board President Baumann was summoned to Albany on September 6, 1934 before Commissioner of Education Graves on the appeal of this Bus Committee.

“Commissioner Graves after hearing both sides, asked Mr. Bauman as to how the Board felt in regards to holding another meeting. Mr. Baumann replied – that the Board felt that they were acting in the best interests of the taxpayers in denying the petition, since in their opinion the petition as presented was not representative of the entire district. Mr. Bauman stated that the Board has always taken a neutral stand and tried to be governed by the sentiments of the taxpayers.”⁶

The commissioner ruled on September 14, 1934 “to the effect that certain residents of the district had petitioned for transportation which had been refused at the Annual meeting of May 1st 1934 that the sentiment of the district has now changed as indicated by the petition. Therefore, the Board is ordered to proceed forthwith to hold a special meeting of the qualified electors of the district in order that a resolution in regard to transportation may be properly and legally presented for consideration and action.”⁷ Four days after the ruling the board passed the following resolution.

RESOLVED, that pursuant to the directive of the Commissioner of Education, a special meeting of the inhabitants of Union Free School District No. 30, of the Town of Hempstead, County of Nassau and State of New York, be called, such meeting to be held at the school building in the

⁶ District 30 Board Minute Books, September 18, 1934.

⁷ *Ibid.*, September 18, 1934.

said district on the 11th day of October, 1934 at eight o'clock in the evening for the purpose of voting upon the following question, proposition of resolution:

RESOLVED, that the sum of \$3300.00 be appropriated, to be raised by tax upon the taxable property of the said district for the purpose of providing for the transportation of pupils to and from the school building in the said district during the school year 1934-35.

The proposition failed by one hundred and fifty votes.

The issue remained quiet until 1938 when it was resurrected by the increased population in the western part of the district due to new home building on the old Curtiss-Write Airport now known as Green Acres.⁸

This all came to a head at the May 3, 1938 annual meeting. It is summed up in the minutes as follows.

At the reading of items 9 – 8, Transportation of Pupils \$300.00 Edward Hannon, Sec'y of the Green Acres civic Ass'n. asking for the floor, read a certified copy of resolutions adopted at their meeting of April 28th; also, a copy of a petition with 75 signatures, petitioning the Board to furnish transportation for the children of Green Acres. Both these papers were turned over to the clerk.

Chairman Salt explained that this was a surprise move and the Board was totally unprepared to state a figure to cover this request. Also that it required a great amount of detail to set up a figure for transportation. There were numerous discussions regarding transportation to and from Green Acres and other sections of the district.

⁸ *Ibid.*, February 16, 1937. "Further business of the evening was dispensed with, to allow Mr. Chanin, President and Mr. Mayer, Sales Agent of Green Acres to present their story of the growth of Green Acres. Mr. Chanin explained that houses were already completed and this morning they had filed plans for 224 more. The development when completed will contain approximately 1800 homes, with surrounding parks, community center, churches, business center etc.

It was finally suggested to vote on the budget as presented tonight and to call a special meeting of the taxpayers of the district at a later date to vote on transportation, thus giving the Board time to prepare data etc, and obtain bids from bus companies. This was agreeable to all present.”

At the June 29, 1938 meeting “Chairman Salt explained that tentative plans were about the same as they were four years ago, 2 buses making, 2 trips each morning and afternoon. Definite figures depended on to-nights’ meeting. The voting to-night would also govern the children to be transported.” The following resolution was defeated by one hundred and sixty six votes on June 29, 1938:⁹

RESOLVED, that a special meeting of the inhabitants of Union Free School District No. 30, of the Town of Hempstead, County of Nassau and State of New York, be called, such meeting to be held at the School Building in the said District on the 29th day of June, 1938 at Eight o’clock in the evening (Daylight Saving Time), for the purpose of voting upon the following question, proposition or resolution:

RESOLVED, that the sum of Four Thousand and five hundred eighty (\$4580) Dollars be appropriated, to be raised by tax upon the taxable property of the said district, for the purpose of providing for the transportation of pupils to and from the school building in the said district during the school year 1938-39.

Two more times before the decade was over transportation propositions failed at the annual meeting. For the 1939-40 school year by forty five votes and 1940-41 school year by two hundred and five votes.

⁹ See Public Education in Valley Stream New York, supra note 2, Volume VXI District Thirty Scrapbook, at 35 for copy of the legal notice.

A summary of the transportation situation from the districts inception till the decade of the forties is as follows. Pupil transportation was given during the 1930-31 and 1933-34 school years. Attempts through voter propositions failed in 1934 twice, 1935, 1939 and 1940.

The decade of the forties opened with “an appeal, served on [President] Mr. Salt made by Mr. Bender of Green Acres, appealing to the Commissioner of Education at Albany, for suitable action to set aside the outcome of the bus proposition at the [1940] annual meeting.”¹⁰ “Another appeal by Mr. John Totten of Nottingham Road on the outcome of the bus vote at annual meeting” was turned over to the school attorney. This appeal focused on the safety of the school children.

relative to the location of the third rail to the pedestrian walk at the L.I.R.R. [Long Island Rail Road] crossing at central Ave. as complained of in an appeal by Green Acres, Mr. Mephram after making an inspection agreed the condition was dangerous. [Principal] Mr. DeLaFleur reports asking [school attorney] Mr. Herman, demanding action on the lack of sidewalks on the Green Acres and westerly and northerly parts of the district.¹¹

These two appeals were turned down by Education Commissioner Ernest E. Cole, who stated that “after giving the matter careful consideration, that there is no authority vested in the Commissioner of Education which would warrant him in reversing the action of the school meeting in this instance.”¹²

¹⁰ District 13 Board Minute Books, May 21, 1940.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, June 18, 1940.

¹² *Ibid.*, September 17, 1940.

At the December 3, 1940 board meeting a delegation from the “Northwest Section” of the district and Green Acres discussed transportation with the board members. At the next meeting “there was a discussion however, concerning the rights of the residents of Green Acres area to petition the Board to submit a proposal for bus service at a special election, to be called by the Board upon petition. The Commissioner indicated that should such a petition be filed with the Board and the Board refuses to call a special election, then the applicant could appeal to the Commissioner for a special election.” A month later the Taxpayers League presented a bus transportation proposition containing 109 names. This \$12,000 expenditure was voted on at the 1941 annual meeting and defeated by 195 votes.

After these transportation proposition defeats the residents of the western part of the district took a different tact. This group under the umbrella of a group called the “Taxpayers League” petitioned the Incorporated Village of Valley Stream about “covering transportation to the west end of the district.” A committee of the Board of Education attended the Village board meeting in 1941 at the resident’s request.¹³ The following was reported at the school district meeting.

Trustee Willmann and Palmer having attended the bus hearing at the village hall, reported that the group composed of representatives of various civic organizations, social groups and individuals, decided on having the Grant Park bus change it’s route so as to cover most of the West end of this district.¹⁴

¹³ *Ibid.*, October 21, 1941.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, November 16, 1941.

The district encouraged the Village and Town to help where it was deemed hazardous or difficult for children to traverse to school. In 1942 “the clerk was directed to write the Village of Valley Stream asking their cooperation in the repair of the Central Avenue crossing of the Long Island Rail Road, where the road is in poor shape and the footpath even worse.”¹⁵

County Trustee Allen moved that a letter be prepared and forwarded to the proper authorities calling their attention to the extensive development of the northwest section of our District and asking that their consideration be given to connecting Sobo Avenue with Hunter Avenue or such other streets as may be necessary to afford direct access to the school building¹⁶

The last two petitions for transportation came at the end of the decade. The board adjourned to the auditorium to hear and be presented petitions for bus service in the district in 1947. “A letter from Keogh, Brennan & Maged enclosing a petition for furnishing bus service to children residing at Alden Terrace was read. The petition contained 57 names.”

A petition for bus service from residents of the northeast section of the district. The petition contained 186 names.”¹⁷

On May 4, 1948 the residents of the district defeated this \$30,000.00 transportation initiative by 190 votes.

About ten years later in 1957 another transportation petition was presented to the board.¹⁸ This petition signed by 400 residents was placed on the ballot at the annual

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, April 21, 1942.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, December 16, 1947.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, October 21, 1947.

meeting in May for the voters to dispose of. The vote was 4 to 1 to place the proposition on the ballot.¹⁹

Proposition

Whereas the Board has been petitioned to submit a proposition to the voters of the District authorizing the raising by taxation of the sum of \$85,000.00 to provide transportation facilities which will include children living one-half mile or more from the school which they attend...²⁰

This transportation proposition was defeated by 1,535 votes.

Request for transportation is not cited in board minutes for another ten years. In 1967 the following was recorded.

Mr. John Stones, 219 Fir Street, Valley Stream, requested school bus service for District 30 children. Trustee Bell informed Mr. Stones that, as mandated by law, the Board is obligated to provide transportation only to children living more than two miles from school. There is no District 30 child who lives outside of the 2 mile distance. In order to change this, a petition signed by 150 taxpayers must be submitted to the Board 6 weeks before the date of voting.²¹

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, April 24, 1957 "Members present agreed not to present the bus transportation to the taxpayers at the Annual Meeting, but to take up the question of transportation when the full Board is in session."

¹⁹ Trustee Bell voted no.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, March 19, 1958.

²¹ *Ibid.*, March 21, 1967.