

Mr. Rasmus called the Millville Area School District Transportation Committee Meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Those present in the library were Joseph Rasmus, Whitney Holloway, Lori Nafus, Glen Rhinard, Rachel Allbeck, Helen Johnson, Edward Sanders, Noah Adams, and Chelsea Rosenberger. Present via Zoom were Susan Myers, William Berger, and Jessica Whitmoyer.

#### eTRAN REPORTING CONCERNS

- Mr. Rasmus opened the meeting reviewing the process for submitting the eTran report to the state. He thanked the new Transportation Coordinator, Ms. Lori Nafus, for starting in her role with this report efficiently and in a timely manner as it is crucial to the reimbursement given to the district for transportation services.
- One concern that came from the eTran report was the miles without students compared to the miles with students. When reviewing the information for the report, Mr. Rasmus mentioned that Lori Nafus realized there were several buses that the miles without students exceeded the number of miles with students. For an example, if a bus was traveling 65 miles a day, but the miles with students is 25, you would double the miles. So, the discrepancy every day of the school year would be 15 miles not reimbursed by the state.
- Mr. Rasmus asked the committee and bus drivers to clarify why the discrepancies may be showing up in this way.
- Mr. Glen Rhinard, bus contractor, answered that the reason for most of these discrepancies is that all of the buses are now stored and are therefore starting from the Leighow's gas station as opposed to in the past having the buses at drivers' houses. He explained that this change was made due to Covid cleaning procedures and needing to have all the buses in one location to sanitize all at once.
- In response, Ms. Nafus asked Mr. Rhinard about the van drivers and where they were storing the vans they are driving.
- Mr. Rhinard answered that the van drivers were storing the vans at their houses.
- To this, Mr. Rasmus asked if it may be advantageous to consider having the drivers store them back at their homes starting with the second semester, citing the driver Helen Johnson in the library. Mr. Rhinard answered that yes it would be less miles for Mrs. Johnson because she would be closer to the beginning of her run.
- Bus driver Rachel Allbeck then shared with the Committee about the buses kept at drivers' homes as opposed to those at Leighow's. After reviewing the bus routes, Ms. Allbeck explained that these practices are saving the district because the ones who live closer to their route than to Leighow's are only submitting mileage for the shorter distance.
- Mrs. Holloway then asked about the van routes because she believed them to be a larger issue.
- In response, Mr. Rhinard reviewed the routes, giving an example of one van that has mileage with students for only 7 miles as opposed to about six times as many miles without students.
- Mr. Rasmus asked if that was something that could be reconsidered to help save the district with reimbursement.
- Mr. Rhinard answered that he has that particular van driver driving the route because it is one of the only drivers he has to use. He went on to explain that the discrepancy cancels itself out with the afternoon run coming from the opposite direction.
- Mrs. Holloway asked Ms. Nafus if the district could put a list together for Mr. Rhinard's review of the van runs that have discrepancies. Mr. Rasmus agreed with this plan and mentioned that some more follow up could happen at the district office at a later date.

## Number of Student Days: Act 80 Day Differential

- Mr. Rasmus then brought up another concern from the eTran report that the current contract pays the bus contractor for days that students are not being transported, due to Act 80 days. The contract that was approved states that the district is to pay for no less than 180 days. However, 7 days were Act 80 days in the 21-22 school calendar, and the district was paying for those days even though no students were transported other than non-public runs to other schools still in session when Millville is not.
- Mr. Rhinard explained that changing to less days would hurt the bus drivers because they are not paid for Act 80 Days.
- Mr. Rasmus questioned his response, stating that the contract has the district paying for Act 80 days.
- Mr. Rhinard answered that his drivers are not paid for Act 80 days because he is not paid for them as the contractor. He explained that when his wife puts together the paperwork to be paid by the district, she calculates the invoice based on 175 days, so the bus drivers are not being paid for Act 80 days because he is not submitting for payment of those days.
- Mr. Rasmus questioned this because the contract states that the district would pay for a minimum of 180 days. He then asked Mrs. Holloway to review this information and what was paid out last year according to what Mr. Rhinard was stating.
- Mr. Rhinard then added that there was a discussion last Spring at Benton School District because they were paying for transportation even when the school was holding a virtual day. So, in response Benton decided to change the contract language to pay the bus contractor for a minimum of 175 days.
- Mr. Rasmus answered that this was helpful information to note and that if the contract were to be changed, this would be an important factor in the amount of Act 80 days for the upcoming year. Going further, Mr. Rasmus mentioned that looking into potential bid contracts, this change to no less than 175 days paid in a school year would be a factor in the language used in the bid proposals.
- Mr. Rhinard then added about a Vo-Tech driver from Benton who was concerned about the amount of Act 80 days for CMAVTS. He shared that the revenue was money that he could have used.
- In response, Mr. Rasmus answered that unfortunately the demands from PDE for professional development have been increasingly demanding. He then asked for clarity from Mr. Rhinard about which outside programs are being transported regardless on Act 80 days.
- Mr. Rhinard: Vo-Tech, Greenwood Friends School, New Story, Columbia County Christian School, Five Star Specialized program. He added that the Sunbury van route is running up a large transportation bill.
- Mr. Rasmus mentioned that there has been some discussion among Superintendents about an alternative placement being created as another option for placements. Going further, he mentioned that the district also has multiple van runs going to the same place because the students are a behavioral concern. He asked if it would be possible to have an aide ride along with the students that we could put runs together.
- Mr. Rasmus mentioned that the concern about not having transportation for students in specialized placements is a liability for the district. When we have these needs for discipline or behavioral reasons to place students in the alternative placements, the district only has a certain amount of time to provide transportation and see the student placed as required by the state. An issue just came up that day with a new van route needed to go to New Story, and Mr. Rasmus was concerned that this would be an issue due to the lack of drivers available for transportation. In the fall, there was a student that needed to be transported to Bloomsburg to the Early Learning Center and no route was available.

- In response, Ms. Nafus added that a lot of the issue would be the timing of the route.
- Mr. Rasmus asked Ms. Nafus if we could look back into the Bloomsburg student, asking if it would be necessary to look for an ancillary contractor to manage that run for the student. Another option that has been utilized by other districts is paying the parents to transport their own student.
- Mrs. Jessica Whitmoyer then asked a question about the student needing an aide to be transported. She was asking about the language written in the IEP and whether the stipulation for the student to be transported individually to Sunbury was in the IEP.
- Mr. Rasmus answered that he would have to look at the IEP as written, but it is probable that the IEP is where that distinction is made.
- Mr. Rhinard then mentioned about a student he had to transport previously to Benton with an IEP that had a stipulation for the student to be taken “to the house” and he had simply dropped off the student at the end of the driveway. The parent had complained that Mr. Rhinard was not following the IEP as written.
- Mr. Rasmus answered that he understood Mr. Rhinard’s frustration, but that the IEP was a legal document. In closing to this discussion, Mr. Rasmus asked Ms. Nafus to follow up about the Bloomsburg student.
- Mrs. Holloway added that if the district is able to put an aide on the van, that would free up a van to take the student to the Bloomsburg placement. Ms. Nafus affirmed that this would indeed create the time and availability if an aide is placed on the van route.

#### Changes to Bus Routes

- Mr. Rasmus mentioned the language in the contract in regards to changes in routes. He asked that if there are changes to bus routes, can that please be communicated to Ms. Nafus. He mentioned that there was an issue with a parent due to changes in the bus route.
- Ms. Allbeck then asked the Committee if that was her bus route where the issue took place.
- Mr. Sanders affirmed that it was Ms. Allbeck’s bus.
- Ms. Allbeck explained the situation, mentioning that there was an agreement with the mother at the beginning of the school year that when the weather is bad, she would not take the bus up the road. The arrangement was that if the bus could not go up the road, the parent would pick up the student from the school.
- Mr. Sanders mentioned that he visited the road and agreed that the road is not safe when there is bad weather. He added that currently it was still covered with snow and ice.
- Mr. Rasmus then asked Ms. Allbeck with the potential for an early dismissal for weather in the upcoming days, what would happen with the student to get home from that dismissal.
- Ms. Allbeck answered that the mom would have to pick up the student from the school when it is bad or in an early dismissal situation like that. Currently, the road in question was still covered with snow and ice because it does not get sunlight. To this, Mr. Rasmus was dumbfounded.
- Mr. Rasmus mentioned that he would like to go on the bus routes to see the roads and routes. After winter break, he mentioned going to see them. In conclusion, Mr. Rasmus asked that if there are any changes to routes in the future to please communicate that with Ms. Nafus.

#### Review of Transportation Contract

- Mr. Rhinard presented fuel prices over the last 2 years. Over the last year and a half, the increase was substantial. Mr. Rasmus asked about some of the drops in price in certain months. Mr.

Rhinard explained that these are most likely due to times in the calendar year when those ups and downs happen. However, his concern was the significant increase over the 2 years.

- Mr. Rasmus asked to Mr. Rhinard what he was hoping to achieve by way of an MOU like in Benton School District.
- Mr. Rhinard said that Benton took the average for the cost of the fuel for the month. Mr. Rasmus asked if currently he is being compensated at that rate at Benton following a spoken agreement. Mr. Rhinard answered that the agreement has not been in effect yet. Going further, he explained that PDE came out with an index before the prices went up substantially last January. For example, the 4% additional the state gave this year, only covered the cost of fuel prices, no other costs. He shared his frustration with the current state of affairs.
- Mr. Rasmus then asked Mr. Rhinard if he might want to wait until the index is out (potentially January), and calculate the proposed rate and have actual numbers to show the board. Mr. Rhinard answered affirmatively, mentioning his negotiation over the Summer with Benton, and that they gave an increase of 70 cents per mile.
- For clarification, Mr. Rasmus attempted to summarize the concerns of Mr. Rhinard for proposals. Based on the rising costs of fuel, as compared to the index, there is a great discrepancy. Mr. Rhinard seemed to be looking for a differential for any time the cost is over that threshold that the district would compensate for that overage. Also, Mr. Rhinard wanted to consider the costs of fuel when transporting students for field trips, athletic runs, and specialized transportation. Mr. Rasmus mentioned that perhaps we should wait until January when the index comes out to reconvene the committee with actual numbers and an actualized proposal.
- Mr. Rasmus then asked Mr. William Berger to comment on waiting until January to see the actualized numbers. Mr. Berger agreed with this assessment.
- Mr. Rasmus then asked the Committee to consider adjustments or missing items from the Transportation contract. He added his recommendation that Item #2 on the contract be reconsidered for a change to “no less than 175 days” being supplanted in the language for Act 80 day consideration for transportation.
- Mr. Rasmus also added that he would like to see all buses have video surveillance because of behavior concerns. He asked Mr. Rhinard what would that look like to make it happen.
- Mr. Rhinard said it would be quite a bit of money. It would cost \$150 a camera. Mrs. Holloway added that there has been recent regulation to cameras. Mr. Rhinard affirmed this and mentioned that the regulations are in response to potential roll overs of the bus because they stick out a bit and could catch. Mr. Rasmus asked what do you do if you do not have that particular type of camera. Mr. Rhinard answered that there was a special type of mount created to match this regulation.
- Mr. Rasmus then asked how could the district partner to get cameras on all buses over time.
- In response, Mr. Rhinard mentioned that Benton School District received a grant to purchase enough cameras to outfit the remaining buses without cameras. Mr. Rasmus added that he could ask the local Superintendent how the grant would work for a contractor. Mr. Rhinard was unsure of the process. He added that the district provided them, but they were maintained by Mr. Rhinard. Mr. Rasmus asked if that was an agreement, but Mr. Rhinard answered that it was just a decision he made if Benton School District purchased the cameras.
- Mrs. Holloway then asked how many buses do not have cameras. After a quick calculation, he said that approximately 10 or 11 buses would need them.

#### Columbia County Christian School Bus

- Ms. Allbeck added that there has had to be some doubling up of drivers for the Columbia Christian School route.

- Mr. Rasmus shared with the committee that there have been a lot of concerns brought to the administration about the Columbia County Christian school run. Parents have shared that they would like their own bus for their students due to the length of time on the bus. In response to them, we shared with the parents that many Millville students are on bus routes that are just as long.
- There was an issue with students sitting at Woolcock's due to a bus driver doing 2 runs on the same day. The parents were concerned about where the bus was in the lineup because they wanted to be last bus in the lineup. After discussion, Mr. Rasmus shared that they were amenable to being located in the front.
- The parents were concerned with the time they are getting to the school. They had shared that the School Administrator does not have a problem with that, but the teachers are expressing their concerns to the parents.
- Mr. Rhinard commented that he had driven that bus many times, and the students are arriving close to the same time as the rest of the students. He added that the students are all in different areas of the district which would make the route very long if they were given their own bus.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Rasmus adjourned the meeting at 8:01 pm.

Chelsea Rosenberger  
Assistant Board Secretary