



Committee Transcript

**Red Clay Community Financial Review Committee
March 19, 2019**

I. Minutes

The February 2019 Minutes and Transcript were reviewed. Mr. Matthews moved to accept the minutes and Mr. Chase seconded. The motion carried.

II. Transportation Presentation

Ms. Kelly Shahan, Red Clay Manager of Transportation presented an annual report on the Transportation Department.

Ms. Shahan addressed the recently reported issue of the Sutton Bus driver who had left a student on the bus after the morning run that was not discovered until later that day. We have a new training called “Out of Sight, Out of Mind”. Ms. Shahan has been meeting with the contractors and our employees with the 15-minute video showing another driver who was terminated and almost arrested regarding leaving a student. There is also a presentation after the training. Every driver will attend this training when they arrive with Red Clay as well as an annual refresher.

In addition, we have implemented a program regarding evacuation procedures with drivers and students. With our drivers we have started, a program called “Finding Montgomery”. We hide this doll on the buses. The doll has a note stating “Hi, my name is Montgomery, thank you for finding me, please return me to dispatch. You’re great for doing your job with pre and post-dispatch.” We are placing these dolls on the buses every day randomly so drivers will go through the habit and find them. They are doing that and finding the dolls. Dr. Ammann invented these scratch offs. When the driver finds Montgomery, they come in and get a scratch off ticket. They can win candy, snack, gift card or such. We are also keeping track to keep stats on what we need to work on.

We worked with a sign company to make magnets that are placed on the front of the bus. When the driver does their pre-trip, the magnet is placed in the back of the bus. For the post trip, the magnet goes to the front of the bus. We have staff members who walk the staff yard to see if the magnet is on the front of the bus. What’s to stop them from leaving them on the bus all day? We have staff randomly walking the buses to make sure no student is on the bus when they are parked in the yard. We have fuelers and staff that check the cameras every day at 9:30. Part of their duties is to walk the bus each time before the check the cameras or fuel the bus.

The last thing we had done is have signs printed that hang above the door of the bus to remind the driver between every run. Human error and not seeing a student is still possible but we are putting all these in place.



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Financially we would like to implement putting a new technology out there. There are tablets we have put on all of our Red Clay buses. They are not on our contractor buses. That may be something we request during the next referendum. It is the way the driver will clock in, entering their id, and click their route. In the past, if a driver was a substitute or spare driver, we would have to email the route to their cell phone, but now they can choose the route and it will show the stops. You can click on a stop to show the students at that stop as well as if the student is a kindergartener or has any special needs. The part we hope will be ready before summer that we'd like to add is called the Child Check Feature. Right now, all the new buses have a buzzer that goes off when you pull your bus into the school. You walk to the back to the bus and hit the buzzer. However, sometimes at the school, you have to wait to release the students and you don't want them sitting here with the buzzer going off. The drivers walk back and tap the buzzer or ask a student to do it. Then, the buzzer doesn't get reset unless they open the doors and turn on their red lights. Then the buzzer doesn't go off again until they return to the yard. With the new feature, Ms. Shahan can set when the tablet will flash, "Check your child's safety" and it won't go off until they pull over at a safe location and walk back and hit the turn off button. It is another feature that can be set to work after each bus run, it is all done by geozones and mapping with the buttons. We are currently the only district to have these tablets, therefore, the only one with this feature. We feel we will move forward with that phase, but will not be able to equip our contractors until the referendum passes.

The other item we would like to implement is the Child Identification System. We have been piloting it on 13 buses. It is a tablet that they punch in the lunch ID every time they get on or off the bus. We have been piloting it with much success. The only issue we have had is that the 13 buses that have the system are at each stop longer than the others are and it holds up the travel line. It is a little frustrating. When all of the buses have it, however, everyone will be back to the same schedule. Ms. Shahan explained that when the students are entering the bus at dismissal, 40 students entering their IDs takes time, but not as much as you think. It is much like the airline. The holdup isn't entering their ID as much as stowing their gear and getting to their seat. The best success we have with it is finding lost children. We never really lose a child, but sometimes they get off at a stop with a friend, or stayed late and not got on the bus. Before we piloted it, we had hours of upset parents, police being involved, and our department trying to track down where the student went after hours. In one case recently, we had a substitute driver, and the child got off at the stop at the McDonalds. We were able to tell mom, and mom went to McDonalds and got her child. Hopefully, with the referendum, we will be able to add these to our buses as well as the contractors.

Ms. Floore added that there is also an effort on the school end, because in the reported incident, there was a component of attendance. Parents get calls at a point in the morning letting them know that their child is not in school that day. There are new procedures as to when the attendance is taken as an absent child triggers the robo calls to the parent. We are also doing it multiple times a day. In the bus incident, the family never got a call as the attendance was taken after the trigger for parent calls.



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Ms. Shahan reported that the 3-tier bussing program is working. The stats are published on Red Clay's webpage monthly. The arrival percentages are 95% to 98% on all 3 tiers. We dipped to 92% for the middle run a few times at the start. If we were able to add the 10 minutes to the middle tier, we could have almost 100%. Because of 3-tier, we are the only district to have a driver for every bus run. We have 10 employees who do not have bus runs, that we can dispatch at a moments' notice to cover a run. When they fail us, we can fill in with our drivers. Personally, she loves having these drivers as last year one of the mechanics ended up driving every day as well as office staff. Students were getting to school, several routes were late, but it isn't safe to have people who don't drive every day, drive the route. Ms. Shahan was driving them as well. She drove so slowly, the students were 30 minutes late to school. It is much safer and more timely with the 3-tier driving. Drivers are now coming to us for jobs as 3-tier gives more work time to the driver. More time gives more benefits. Everyone has full medical and dental benefits.

The negative of 3-tier busing is the cost. It costs an additional \$184,000 due to payroll costs. There is a state bus contract for every bus that we have doing routes. The contract was created over 30 years ago and is based on single bus runs running 3.5 hours a day. Every bus in the state, when the State gives us money for the buses, is based on 3.5 hours and single runs. When many moved to 2-tier, we lost money. Now, with 3-tier, we are much more efficient and delivering more for our families in service, but there is a cost. Ms. Floore added only because the formula that the State uses is antiquated. Ms. Shahan stated that the cost increase is \$184,000 but the State is saving \$645,000. 3-tier reduced the number of bus contracts for the State, and saved them money. Ms. Floore, Dr. Ammann and Representative Kim Williams are currently working with the state to address this budget issue. Ms. Shahan is on a committee that is trying to change things. Ms. Floore added that the formula needs updating. The math of funding one route for 3.5 hours for say 150, rather than a more expensive route but fewer of them. In this case, their formula has room for that. We have brought them the models and have had a good dialogue thus far. If we don't, we will come back and ask for help to put pressure on another way. Mike Ramone is also involved in the discussions.

Another con is the elementary schools are adjusting to starting after 9:00 AM. It can make for a difficult work commute and work day. We did this, as we needed to get the students to school on time. Ideally, there would be better start time, as in the old days, it was one start time. Even the single tier are going 2-tier because the driver shortage. Ms. Shahan stated it is tough to get your CDL. It is low pay for some of the things a driver has to go through. Mr. Matthews added that without benefits to take care of their family, why would you.

Mr. Matthews added that he is thrilled and excited about all of the new initiatives Ms. Shahan and Transportation has put into place. He is excited for the employees in the department as well. During snow days transportation is already on site cleaning off the buses to be on the road. The 4:00 AM start times are real. What they do for the employees to feel valued is important. The appreciation the employees feel is real. All of the snow days have been murky. When is it going to snow, rain, etc.? The employee were on the road and did a great job.



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Ms. Thompson asked how many buses we have bus aides in. Ms. Shahan answered that we have 45 bus aides. However, they are mostly paid from local funds as the State only funds aides on contract for aides that are needed for special needs students who have an identified disability that prevents them from being safe on a bus without restraint or an aide. Ms. Thompson stated she believes it is impossible for the driver to drive the bus and watch the students. Ms. Thompson believes this is something we should be pushing for as well as the drivers should be concentrating on the driving and not the students. Mr. Matthews asked about IDEA funding. Ms. Shahan answered that only if the child has the disability for the bus. Transportation has to be a related service as part of their IEP or 504 plan.

The increase in student behavior is the biggest threat we have right now. We go out to the schools and we give the students training. We even have creative moments of “talent show Tuesday” and have the students singing while on line to alleviate the tensions. One of the most horrific of videos, however, has five students fighting in the back of the bus with a bus aide trying to climb over seats to get back. It is usually the afternoon, not the morning. Bus aides would certainly help. Ms. Floore stated that we speak to that at the schools all the time. If you have bad behavior that leads to a bus suspension, that child often stays home from school without transportation. What is the alternative? Every situation is different. Our schools are held to a high accountability especially with suspensions. If the student isn't there, they aren't learning. There may be in-school suspensions. It is part of the school's overall plan.

Ms. Shahan mentioned they considered a “suspension bus” for those students. One of the things that 3-tier has afforded us is knowing that certain neighborhood bus stops should not be riding together on the same bus because of behavior. That has helped a lot. They also spoke about bus referrals. They found that Transportation was using a referral system from DSC that didn't link with the schools' wrap system. The referrals were going nowhere. This year, we are using the wrap system, and we have an immediate response from the school. The drivers are feeling much more supported. We also put a student management team made up from peers who are strong in student management. They review wrap and see where a student has a lot of write-ups. They will speak with the driver of that bus and pull the video. They then work with the school and sometimes ride the bus with the student. We have great success with that. We want students in the bus. It is safer than even riding in your parent's car. And it beats sitting in a car line.

Ms. Shahan welcomes any suggestions the Committee has as well as offered an invitation for them to ride a bus for the experience. Ms. Shahan also welcomes any support from the Committee on obtaining funding for bus aides.

Ms. Shahan reported that this year we took on Wilmington Charter School and have been transporting their students. Every year she would receive calls from Cab Calloway parents who also had Charter students asking if they could ride the same bus. Ms. Floore added that the district would get calls regarding the number of buses that travel through the same neighborhoods. Now we collaborate with Charter and Cab so that the students



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travel together and get to school on time. Parents are happier, however, there is an additional cost to us of about \$86,000 for us to transport those students. With 3-tier we would have gone down 3 buses with Cab. But with Wilmington Charter, we have the same number as before with the larger population of students. The State, however, save \$659,000 as the State gives money to the charters for transportation. If the Charter signs with cheaper transportation, they can then use the money elsewhere in the school. All of the charters do this. Ms. Thompson asked then why don't they pay us. Ms. Shahan explained that the State took the money back. Red Clay can transport them, but we don't get any additional money. Ms. Floore stated that Red Clay and Representative Kim Williams has been meeting with OMB on this issue. It is ironic that there is a GEAR (Government Efficiency Accountability Review) task force, and when we are efficient, they don't recognize it. They are aware and we're hoping to hear from them soon. Ms. Thompson stated this isn't a difficult thought process.

Ms. Shahan also spoke about Odyssey Charter School bus sharing. Ms. Shahan reported that Odyssey's management approached us with the offer of providing some transportation as they only have one tier. We looked at the times and could work together. Odyssey still gets the funding from the State as they bought their buses outright from operating funds. Then, the State approved that Odyssey transport our students. There was no "double-dipping". The students of ours that they transport attend Cooke Elementary because of proximity. Ms. Thompson thought it was an odd pairing. Ms. Shahan explained that they students from Cooke and students from Odyssey are not riding together because of different bell times. Once they have run their students to Odyssey, they can then make the run for Cooke for us. Ms. Shahan runs the same trainings with their drivers as we have and they are receptive to the other protocols as well. We partner with them on fueling and maintenance so it is a positive partnership.

One of our goals is to make our drivers feel that they are part of something. We have put several things in place. We have painted the driver entrance area, we hang up their pictures when they do good things, and we recognize them as star of the day and finding Montgomery. We put into play an attendance bonus and it absolutely works. They would get \$100 a quarter and if they made all 3 quarters, they would earn an additional \$200 for coming to work every day. She had 3 people out of 80 last year total. Now, we have doubled it to \$200 a quarter and \$400 at the end of the year. They cannot be absent, late or miss one of their tier runs, they have to make everyone. At this time last year, we had 15 drivers make the second quarter. This year had 37 make it this year second quarter. It is huge. The students have consistency, our dispatch isn't trying to cover routes, and it is a great thing for the department. We added a bonus for drivers who take on a city run. You have to come to work every day, drive a city run, have no accidents and you get another \$200 at the end of the year. The drivers were cheering when it was announced. Ms. Shahan thanks the Board as it was approved to increase the drivers' pay \$1 increase. It has gotten even more people to come to Red Clay.

There is a school bus rodeo every year at Smyrna High School. Any driver in the state can sign up and compete. They have an obstacle course, a bug bus which has to be diagnosed, proper railroad stops and parallel parking. We've had several winners.



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Montgomery Byrd in our dispatch office has won several years. When they win, our district has then paid for them to go to nationals. This year we have over 10 people competing from Red Clay. On their own time, we have trainers that take them out on weekends without pay to practice.

Mr. Schwartz asked if there was any benefit from sharing this with the greater population. Ms. Floore agrees and will try to highlight through EDTV and articles that will be included in our communications plan coordinated through Pati Nash in our district office. Ms. Nash is retiring and the position is posted. The communications will include all positions in Red Clay.

Ms. Shahan stated her biggest challenge is having their shop more structured with regular maintenance of the buses. We don't want buses doing runs that have marred paint. We are the best district in the state, and our buses should reflect that. We have been working on it with our new shop foreman. We also take care of all of Maintenance Department's equipment for lawn care and snow removal. If a goal post needs to be welded, our mechanics do it. If a cafeteria chair needs fixing, we handle it. If playground equipment needs to be put up or taken down, our shop handles it. The typical response time on that work has not been good in the past and she has worked to improve that. When she learned that the mail person was retiring, Transportation took on the mail delivery. They built a mailroom in their shop. She requested the mail person State unit be given to Transportation so they could get another mechanic and they could give Maintenance a dedicated mechanic so that their work can be completed within 48 hours. Our first priority is still the buses, but we need Maintenance's equipment to also be kept up to date. The result has been fantastic. Ms. Thompson asked who delivered the mail. Ms. Shahan stated it is our bus drivers as they are going there anyway. It gives them more time in their workday as well.

Most of Transportations phone calls and emails in the past have always been complaints. Lately, we have been getting praise from parents and schools. She received a fourth letter from a school Chief Custodian letting her know that he has seen a big difference in the service and timeliness. Our student numbers and buses have grown over the last 20 years, but the Transportation office and shop staff had not. Ms. Thompson asked if her group has to sort the mail as well. Ms. Shahan explained that bus aides don't usually have the opportunity to earn more hours. They don't do field trips or inspections. She has two employees who sort the mail every day. It is working out very well.

Mr. Matthews asked why Charter is no longer receiving the funds for transportation from the State. Ms. Floore explained, because they are no longer transporting the students. But they are having them transported by Red Clay. We are waiting for the State formula to be adjusted. There is nothing that allows it or prevents it, but the formula doesn't reflect it. Ms. Shahan added that we are the first district to partner this way. Mr. Matthews asked that will it be retroactive. Ms. Floore agreed that it would be retroactive.

Ms. Shahan also spoke about the red light cameras on some of our buses. When the stop arm comes out on the bus, there is a camera there that will film both ways of the car that



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passes the bus while the red lights are flashing. The car, its driver, and license plate can be seen with the camera. Right now, it is hard to prosecute someone for the violation, as you cannot prove who was driving. Motion triggers the camera. We have piloted it on two buses from December. We are clocking four a day per bus. Sometimes it is the same car. We have 15 buses we are adding shortly. As a result, Representative Kim Williams is putting forth an illegal bus-passing bill. Our vendor tells us that 16 states already have a law in place for this issue. In some cases, the money goes to the school district, some goes to the state, and everyone handles it differently. It has made a difference in the number of people who run the stop. Rob Markopolous, who runs our TV station at McKean, has been putting together a PSA. A year ago, a special needs student was boarding the bus while her mother was with her, and the flashing lights were on. The car did not just run the stop; it ran into the back of the bus as she was stepping on the steps. The camera angle is from above the bus driver looking down the steps as the students enter. You can see and hear the screams. Mr. Markopolous is using the video clip, with the parents' permission, in the PSA. Kim Williams is also in the PSA for the bill called Laura's Law. Laura is the name of the student. Tomorrow we are filming Mote students for the same PSA. That should be happening by the end of March, early April. Mr. Schwartz asked if Kim Williams would let us know when the bill is ready, so that we can reach out to our other representatives to have them support it as well. Mr. Pappenhagen asked if we need the bill to prosecute. Does the camera provide enough evidence to prosecute? Ms. Shahan explained that it does not and the bill is needed. The other states have the law in place.

Ms. Shahan thanks the Board that allows Transportation to have this wonderful technology that not only tracks the bus, but also lets us know how fast they are going and what they're doing. If anyone refutes the video evidence, we have a second level of evidence with GPS data and give them the stats on the bus. The other states related that the GPS evidence is very helpful. With the bill, the first offense is \$250, and it goes up from there. Mr. Schwartz asked how much would our investment be into the technology? Ms. Shahan stated that we already put cameras on all of our buses. She doesn't have the numbers in front of her. It wouldn't be much more to put cameras on the stop arms. It ties into the computer camera system we have. We already have 4-5 cameras on the buses; one over the driver into the stairwell, one in the back, on the sides, some have dash cams as well. Those are very helpful in the case of an accident or with a child crossing as we can see what is happening. Adding the stop arms is not a huge additional cost. If we retrofitted to all of our buses, that would cost, but going forward on every bus we order, we would include that in the order. Ms. Thompson stated that there are incidences where you can pass a bus. Ms. Shahan stated if the road has four lanes. The stop arm camera would not see that far anyway.

Ms. Shahan welcomed the committee's suggestions and invited them to visit the Transportation Yard to see the operation for themselves. We have been looking for a different space to keep our buses. She has used GM's old parking with permission from Harvey-Hannah who now owns that property. We then asked to partner with them to move our fleet there in the future. They came to us and looked at our current operation taking pictures and making diagrams. They asked if we would share space with another



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company. No answers as yet but they are still considering it. The other piece is we are working with Delaware State University to use their space on Kirkwood Highway. We have an MOU in place now, but they could not handle all of the buses in that space. Ms. Floore added that 24-hour security is an issue. Buses do not lock. Mr. Schwartz asked if we have had issues with vandalism where the buses are now. Ms. Shahan stated that they have not. The area they are in is fenced in. Mr. Chase asked about the Verizon property across from Delaware State that is all fenced in and currently empty. Ms. Shahan answered that Dr. Daugherty had reached out to them at one time. Ms. Floore stated that we also looked into Emily Bissell Hospital.

Ms. Rattenni thanked Ms. Shahan for her time and information.

III. Monthly Expenditure Reports

Ms. Floore distributed the February 2019 Expenditure Report. The revenue side we are 94% and local revenue is 99%. There were some tax parcels that were reassessed to a lower amount and we are still in good shape. The budget number is lower to anticipate delinquent payments. We typically, in a good year, we go over 100%. The money we receive now are those late payments. Ms. McIntosh asked how much we received from the outside collection agency. Ms. Floore doesn't know off the top of her head. There was a news article about it. The County also has their own collectors as well working with the immediate delinquents. We always have late payments. The new collections is something else. They are seeing more success on the later sewer payments as that is commercial.

We are at 94.06% and ahead of where we were last year. Transportation is at 75.3% and last year we were at 71.07%. We are not seeing the million-dollar difference. Even if the State gives us what we are asking for, we're not going to make money off the State. The State will still save money. It just won't cost us money for them to save money. It hasn't put us into a budget spiral.

The end of February, we are closer to the end of the year. There aren't any areas of concern other than related services and special education. Spec Ed can include legal cases and settlements. Related services is our therapists. They have not overspent, but have encumbered more to cover the student therapy costs. We watch them very closely. Ms. Floore works very closely with Sarah Celestin who will be giving a presentation to the Board tomorrow on Spec Ed growth.

We are 63% expended and 65.5% expended and encumbered. Based on the months at 2/3 through the year is 66%. We are slightly higher than last year but right on target.

Ms. Zimmerman asked about the copy center being a negative number. Ms. Floore explained that the copy center will do big jobs for materials and school-wide projects. Then, those are billed back to the school. They will receive the funds back from the school and department budgets. The copy center is located at Brandywine Springs School. The same is for Transportation when they transport for sports or field trips. It



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gets billed back. Ms. Zimmerman asked if the maintenance of the school equipment gets billed back to the school. Ms. Floore stated, no the maintenance equipment is part of our fleet.

We are early on the federal grant side. We are dipping into FY 2019 now. Those funds typically start in October and we have into 2020 to finish those funds.

We are good on tuition and will get the bills out to the other districts. Meadowood has related services, which are high. That is strictly the therapists, speech, physical and occupational, and psychologists. Still right on track on 66% for Meadowood in RPLC. We have spoken about utilities. They are over budget as we earned more money. They earned more units, which comes with more utility funding.

The last is where we are on substitutes. We have a bi-weekly meeting with the vendor. We have seen significant growth. They are at 300 substitutes now and started with 80. They do not all work every day but we have seen a great increase in our fill rates. Not 100% as yet. We met with the entire RFP team and renewed with another year based on this progress. The team consists of teachers, administrators and staff in collaboration. Ms. Thompson asked about fill rates downtown. Ms. Floore explained that we have asked that ESS work with Pritchett Associates. The Pritchetts provide substitutes for the charter schools downtown. ESS has agreed to work with them to specifically target our schools. The Pritchetts are going to provide training for urban substitute situations as well as supplementing the substitutes we need in our schools. It is not 100% but more than it was before. That is a product of the labor market and the job. Ms. Thompson added the pay as well. A substitute gets \$104 per day. The legislatures are aware of it. We continue to talk about it. No matter what rate the State sets, the substitutes are paid locally. We don't receive State funding for substitutes. Under the new bill, that guarantees 12 weeks of leave. We will receive \$104 per day for teachers only. Everyone in the district is eligible for that 12-week leave if you have a child or adopt a child under the age of five. That is a mother or a father. We are very concerned if we are not filling now, the fill rates will be harder with this leave. Ms. Thompson asked if we could raise the rate. We can and we have as we pay more than any other district for a substitute. The only way we can do this is through savings. If we were fully filled, we wouldn't have had that savings. We cannot live without them. We pull everyone, divide classes. Mr. Chase stated he gets a schedule every day of who has to cover. Ms. Thompson stated it is more a problem in the city schools as it makes teachers not want to teach in the city schools as they will be pulled off of their regular responsibilities. Ms. Floore agreed. The collaboration with the Pritchetts and pay increase is new. We increased our pay by \$15 a day, which is significant. It went into effect March 1, 2019. Increasing that also had to increase long-term substitutes. Mr. Pappenhagen asked about Class C subs. Ms. Floore stated that yes, the Class C substitutes will be below minimum wage come October. Christina has set the referendum for April 30, 2019. Woodbridge failed in their referendum as well as Indian River. Capital School district is also going to referendum soon.



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IV. Public Comment

There was no public comment. There was an email from Jack Wells, community member, received through the CFRC web page. The email was directed to the CFRC. The Indian River school board member commented. Ms. Floore distributed a copy of that email to the members. The email spoke to referendums and auditors giving his recommendation to the new auditor.

Ms. Rattenni thanked Ms. Floore for the job she and her staff do every day. Especially since being the interim superintendent these past few months.

V. Announcements

The next meeting will be Tuesday April 9, 2019 in the Baltz District Office Board Room at 6:30 PM. There will not be a presentation in April.