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Red Clay Community Financial Review Committee July 9, 2019

I. Recent Legislation

Ms. Floore explained that there are two new companion pieces of legislation. The first was the Redding Commission. That will study similar things as WEIC studied. The second piece of legislation is that the State Board can change the boundaries without referendum. Under WEIC, there was a lot of hoops and it finally got to the State Board. Part of the plan was that the School Boards had to approve it. Now, the State board can just do it. Ms. Floore recalls the argument that it was unconstitutional. Ms. Thompson stated that there is something in the Constitution and attorney, Barry Willoughby, had written a letter on it. She will locate that letter. The interesting thing is putting the cart before the horse. Whatever the Redding Commission comes up with, the State can approve. The Redding Commission is set up through 2023. Mr. Chase asked if they will use any of the work that WEIC already did. Ms. Floore doesn't know if the University of DE is going to staff the commission as they did the last time. We don't have a lot of information.

II. Minutes

The June 2019 Minutes and Transcript were reviewed. Ms. Thompson moved to accept the minutes and Mr. Pappenhagen seconded. The motion carried.

III. Tax Rate

Ms. Floore presented the recommended tax rate for Fiscal Year 2020. There are four tax rates. The current operating expense is set by referendum and our last one was 2015. There are two that the School Board has the authority to increase or decrease. The first is the match tax. That is the idea that we can match the State appropriation. Ironically, the State has done away with many of them, but we are allowed to continue to match them. There are some that are still State appropriated. Technology and the Minner Resource Teachers are no longer State funded appropriations, but there still exists a local match for it. The new line is Opportunity Funds. The State did provide significant additional funding, and by formula, Red Clay was the beneficiary of that for ELL, high poverty and mental health. It was tied to a formula by school, but now it is more flexible as we earn a fund with an additional allocation for mental health support. The mental health support was provided to elementary schools based on the formula for poverty and ELL. It is less flexible where we can spend the funding. There are three funds. There is the \$1.8 million from last year, the \$1 million from this year and the additional allocation of mental health. The new change is all three of those funding pots can be matched. That wasn't the case last year.

K-3 Special Education is not fully funded and each year they add to it. K-4 they added more due to steps and increases for employees providing that service costs were up. Tuition is the 3rd category and that is for intense and complex special education students.



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The 4th category is debt service. FY 16 was the 4th and final year of phasing, but the last major capital referendum was in 2012. We have been paying off old debt. We have reached our peak and are falling down on the curve.

The tax warrant is due this Thursday by law. The County is anxious to send out the tax bills. We have spoken at length about our assessed property values in Red Clay. Last year was the first year we've seen them decline. They are back on the rise very slightly but that can always change based on appeals throughout the year. Though there are multi-million dollars' worth of appeals in the que again, how that transpire lies with the appeals board with the County. We did see a ½ percent in the overall growth which is good. Ms. Thompson asked what that is attributed to. Ms. Floore explained it is due to betterments of properties or new construction. New Castle County doesn't see a lot of new building. Appoquinimink sees an incredible amount of growth in their new construction assessments. We have had some new developments. We lost Boxwood Road, but now it is Harvey and Hannah so that is beginning to come back. Last year we went into the hole with \$5.2 million, this year we increased by \$25 million. That is not revenue, we divide that by 100 and every cent on that rate is the tax.

Historically, the Board has always asked what is our loss to the tax pool. The first 46.8 cents of all taxes of every dollar in Red Clay, Brandywine, Christina and Colonial goes into the tax pool and is distributed out by percentage. If that did not exist, we would have \$1.9 million more than we have currently going into our revenue. It is historic and goes back to the lawsuit when all of the districts were formed. It was the tax rate at the time. A lot of discussion in WEIC was on this tax rate. Everyone in the County was paying that rate at the time. When dividing the districts, there were some with more property wealth than others. This was to make it equitable. Before Ms. Floore came into Red Clay, there was discussion of breaking up the tax pool, but it did not happen. Ms. Thompson asked if the tax pool was New Castle County. Ms. Floore answered it is only the four districts consolidated. Not VO Tech, Appoquinimink or Smyrna. It is only taken from the taxes of those four districts. Ms. Thompson asked where the \$1.9 million goes. Ms. Floore answered that arguably it goes to Christina and Colonial. If you took our tax rate on assessed values, it would be \$1.9 million higher than what we're getting out of the pool. Mr. Pappenhagen asked if Brandywine makes out worse than we do because they have wealthier properties. Ms. Floore answered that it fluctuates but on whole no. The interesting thing is Brandywine is a huge beneficiary in the tax pool not because of the tax pool, but because of when it was frozen. The factor was frozen when it went to needs based funding, so Brandywine gets to count all of their intense and complex kids in the allocation so get a larger overall share than the districts that transitioned to needs-based funding later. The equalization formula is still frozen. Ms. Floore makes the argument that without reassessment, none of these formulas work as they are intended to and they continue to show disparity.

There are items that play into the tax rate. With the match for K-3 basic special education, our state allocation increased from \$337,000 to \$582,000. When there is a match on that, it means the local share also goes up. K-4 Reading is the same \$793,000 to \$892,000. The opportunity grants targeting ELL and high poverty went from \$1.7



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million to \$2.8 million, which is over \$1 million or 10.5 positions. For the mental health funding it is an additional \$1.2 million or 10 positions. The Board can match up to 30% of all three at \$1.7 million.

The State has given us a significant amount of funding, but they still have the \$2.8 million cut. The new funding is specific where the \$2.8 million was more flexible in use. They took away Minner Teachers, but now we have teachers for reading which is similar. We are extremely grateful for the State investment. The work of WEIC and education advocacy has been successful in that regard for higher needs schools.

The State did provide a 2% raise share on the State-side of salaries. And a \$1,000 for the custodial, paraprofessionals, secretaries and other employee groups. They also funded steps for teachers and lowered the pension rate plan due to successful performance in the plan. They increased substitute pay by \$6 per day. At the Business Managers' meeting the other day, there was discussion about the legislators that they don't fund substitutes and we are going to exacerbate our problem and our shortage with the Parental Leave Act guaranteeing 12 weeks of leave. The amount of people eligible for leave with increase dramatically. The one thing the PLA did do was the State will pay for the substitute. We have to track that. We don't pay \$110/day as we pay a vendor to contract the substitute. The State won't pay us the rate we pay, but they will reimburse the \$110 for teachers. The other employee groups we are on our own for the cost of the substitute. And in the case of paraprofessionals, we must have a substitute if we are able to find one. We are preparing for a full school year of leave since the law went into effect April 1 of this year.

There was a Transportation formula adjustment made Statewide of \$9.4 million for a structural deficit, increases to the formula and a bus driver increase. The other is very particular to Red Clay. The piece of epilogue of \$300,000 in the bond bill specifically for Red Clay to work on the appeal on how working with the Charter School of Wilmington and the 3-tier transportation system saved the State a lot of money, but it cost us money. Not only did they put in epilogue, but they put in an allocation for minor capital improvement for last year's savings. We had a lot of conversation with people from the State explaining to the GEAR (Government Efficiency Accountability and Review Committee), how we saved money. We haven't finished all the final calculations, but that \$300,000 is in the ballpark.

In the past, they have increase minor capital funding. That also has a match. That maintains the same level of support. They also continued security funding in the bond bill. People really want that to be in the operating bill so it can be used for SROs. At some point the building can only have so many cameras installed and card readers. We really need the SRO. But when you're speaking to 20-30 year bond money, you can't use it for operating expenses. There is still a push to the state to remove it from the bond bill. We're no longer talking about buildings, but people.

The financial system has come up online today. The staff has had their workshops on the new account coding. This is the first full year of implementation of the new accounting



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structure. The system is the same, but the numbers and formats of the codes, which Debbie Roberts spoke of at the last meeting, that have changed.

Rumors are out that there is a ruling from the Judge this summer regarding reassessment. The lawsuit outcome is still not determined. There were two parts. One was reassessment and the other was the overall funding of schools. The motion to dismiss was denied. Ms. Thompson stated that a summary judgement should be coming. Ms. Thompson added that the summary judgement is a stage of the lawsuit where you know what the evidence is from taking the depositions and it can be deemed that there is or is not a claim. They render judgement based on the evidence. Mr. Chase asked if it was similar to an indictment. Ms. Thompson stated it is not criminal. She added that if you awarded summary judgement, you win or lose and the case does not go to trial. It can be appealed. Ms. Floore asked if the judge has to rule in summary judgement. Ms. Thompson answered that he did. It could go to trial. Ms. Floore added that the Red Clay judgement was to go to trial. Ms. Thompson added that it is a later stage than the motion to dismiss. The motion to dismiss is based on the depositions and the allegations in the complaint. The summary judgement is based on the evidence.

The recommendation for the Tax Rate is to increase by one cent. That is misleading as the recommendation is for a significant increase in the tuition tax of 3 cents. However, based on expiring debt, the recommendation is to decrease debt service, which offsets the increase. The recommendation is not for all of the \$1.3 million for the match tax of the opportunity funds, but we are recommending one cent. We go through a spring staffing process where we project all of the enrollment, and go by caseload. We look at the number of students as well as those in the intense and complex categories. Coming down to Special Education minutes, ELL minutes for those who are served and require services. We look at the caseloads of the psychologists and EDs. The budget for review has an additional 50 people going in. In large part, they are funded by the opportunity funds. There is a significant number of people in the autism program. We have a significant number of students with autism coming to our program that is offset by a \$1 million we were paying to the Delaware Autism Program. It is a \$2.7 million increase that is recommended for Special Education in Red Clay, but it is offset by the \$1 million savings.

Ms. Thompson asked how much of the Opportunity Grant are we matching. Ms. Floore explained we are matching one-third of it. We are hiring ELL and reading teachers and counselors. One of the problems with the mental health support is that they targeted and made it so it is only eligible for elementary schools. We have needs for psychologists in the secondary schools and the pre-K level. Ms. Thompson asked that even though the Opportunity Grants are for elementary, we can match it and go to the middle schools. Ms. Floore agreed that is her recommendation based on caseload and schools that absolutely need to add them.

Ms. Thompson asked that if one mental health person in the school is sufficient. Ms. Floore explained that the State put language in that we cannot supplant. However, three years ago, Red Clay went out on a limb and said we want to provide full time



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psychologists at every single building. The Board decided to fund that out of Tuition. No other district was doing that and it wasn't just psychologists but it was EDs. It was a significant investment. We are penalized, because with the supplanting language, we cannot use those Opportunity Grants to offset those costs. It has to be additional, but it is additional to a significant investment already made. Ms. Thompson asked that in some schools we might have two. Ms. Floore stated that is absolutely true. Ms. Floore explained that what is good about the language is written that the funds only go to those schools and gives the schools the flexibility of what they need the most. It can be behavior, psychologist, or a licensed clinical social worker. It can also be reading support, which is in the mental health support. The school like Lewis, which is wrestling with the ideas that he, needs a counselor but he needs reading support. The principals have the flexibility to make that decision at the building level. We, as a district, are letting them make that decision on how they can use that person.

In total it is an increase to the average household is \$8 more than last year. It is a huge investment in our district without a big tax increase because of the offset of debt service. It is an exciting year and a wonderful opportunity as there have been many years we've been discussing cuts.

Current Expense there is no change as there cannot without a referendum. Debt Service is going down by three cents. We have paid off some of our debt on each Bond that is purchased separately. Our interest has peaked, and we are back now where we were 5 years ago. We are exactly where we said we would be when we made the presentation for the referendum.

Ms. Thompson asked about K-3 additional monies we are receiving from the State, going from \$337 to \$582,000 about \$250 difference. In the \$1 million and \$1.2 million for the mental health is the total for the new money. Ms. Floore stated we can match not just the new money but the old money as well. Ms. Thompson stated it is good but it isn't a whole lot more. Ms. Floore added that our State funding reductions were \$2.8 million. We also received K-2, K-4 and opportunity money last year. We are actually ahead in total but not by much. Mr. Dave Sokola spoke to Ms. Thompson stating that the State has given \$100 million in education. Ms. Floore explained that every year the state grows in units. Out of frustration, some State legislators have questioned the schools of making up the special education numbers. We were at an all-time low for discretionary dollars for students. But every year, the State has had to fund the additional units, and when you talk about the 2% for the employees and the steps, that is a significant investment every year. So even if there is a cut in discretionary money there is typically an increase in education funding because of unit growth which really isn't an increase in programming or other services but a reflection of more students.

Units and education are considered guaranteed, so they cannot be taken away. Those two must be funded before you can even speak to discretionary funding. Interestingly enough, they passed a piece of legislation to investigate special education and the number of students. We know people move into Delaware for special education services,



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specifically autism, because we are a birth mandate state and we have to provide services from time of birth. We provide it now on an itinerant basis and through DAP.

Ms. Floore went on to explain that we are recommending \$2.7 million more, which is a lot more than three cents. We are asking for 17 positions in autism alone. But it is offset by the \$1 million in tuition payments to other agencies that we are no longer funding in DAP. This will support the 17 positions in autism, 2 in pre-Kindergarten, 3 in special education, and 4 paraprofessionals for a total tuition increase of 26 units. How many of those are going to be new units earned, and how many will be fully tuition funded? We estimated that we will earn half. Half will be state/local split and 13 units would be 100% tuition funded. The former DAP bill was 100% tuition funded. Therefore, the three cents will fund it. Dr. Celestin can go over room-by-room where these positions will be located. The Early Years Program will still have pockets such as Warner. But all of the pre-K classes at Baltz will be leaving after summer school and they will all be housed at what used to be Central. The State will not fund an Early Years certificate of necessity. We are very fortunate to already have the building at Central for this program.

Ms. Zimmerman asked what other programs are at the Central building. Ms. Floore explained that the Groves School is still located at the building as well as DAPI. DAPI is currently looking for space in Christina. The office staff of Special Education that was at Central will be returning to Baltz and using the former Pre-K rooms.

Ms. Thompson asked if we are confident that we will be able to find people to fill these positions. Ms. Floore stated that we posted early, but we may have to come to the Committee letting you know that the salary number we budgeted will have to be contractual services. It is not teachers, but all of the related services positions. Physical, speech, occupational therapists as well as mental health personnel. Not counselors, all of our school counselors are employees. All of our nurses are employees. There is a shortage of teachers. Some of our own, and some are new hires. Carol Beck is hiring 10 new ELL positions. But some are homegrown from the schools already. These are teachers in the classroom working to be ELL certified. The University of Delaware program has been very successful for us.

Not a lot difference in the other categories. In the MCI and match tax, the new opportunity fund matched to fund the mental health in the secondary schools. It could have come under tuition or match. Mr. Green and Ms. Floore decided it was better under match as it will be in the mental health funding. We want to make a point to the state that mental health is needed in all grades. The State feels that they have to start somewhere. Ms. Thompson stated the other match numbers have gone up slightly.

Ms. Rattenni asked that with the one-cent increase, as the year progresses, do we have it in the budget to do more. Review certain MCI or tuition and make adjustments. Ms. Floore explained that we cannot combine. The tax warrant goes by category and we are audited by category. If there is a balance, we can carry it over and offset whatever tax increase may be necessary. Each category has contingencies for extenuating



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circumstances. They are not all projected to end with a zero balance. We cannot take it from one to use for the other.

Tuition has changed the most in a five-year history from 36 to 51, even more than Current Expense. Debt Service has come right back to where it was. And Match Tax is where the school boards argue that the State is shifting money. It is shifting money but they are providing more money. The State puts up 70% and we put up 30% if we want. Many districts do not. Ms. Floore presents this to the Board tomorrow night. Brandywine School District goes up 9.5 cents this year. Christina is going up 3 cents. Colonial didn't change. Ms. Thompson asked why Brandywine went up so much. Ms. Floore explained because of tuition and match tax, they didn't match last year so the increased expenses catch up.

After tonight, the warrant has to be passed tomorrow. Then the County will send out the bills. We will continue to monitor and meet monthly. The Governor's budget will come out in January. They have built items in their budget for revenue smoothing. The idea that when there is a downturn, they don't appropriate all of their funds. There are those who argue there is money for reassessment rather than keeping a reserve.

IV. Preliminary FY 2020 Budget

Ms. Floore distributed a copy of the Preliminary FY 2020 Budget. The budget is a reflection of the discussion we have just had.

We are ahead on revenue and under on expenses. We came in at 1.46% more on revenue and .33 less expenses than budgeted. Our budget was an ending balance of \$14.6 million and we ended with just over \$15 million. We are in a healthy position going forward. Ms. Floore's recommendation is there is no referendum needed at this time. We have a huge investment in positions this year. We will maintain with no deficit spending at this time. Ms. Thompson asked where we were at this time last year. Ms. Floore replied \$13.9 million. We grew our ending balance very slightly. 1% of overall budget. It is sufficient to meet our obligations.

We have seen a significant increase in interest. We can see in the preliminary budget, Page 16, the differences and we received \$778,000 more in interest. Our balance had not changed that much, it is just a difference in how the State Treasurer's office is earning and applying the interest to the various groups.

We came in slightly ahead in taxes. We budget 99% and the Counties efforts to collections and the appeals, even though we had negative assessments, we came in ahead. Those two are \$1.5 million, which is incredible news. We came in \$1.9 million ahead on the local side and \$1.2 million ahead on the State side. But the State side is \$1.6 mostly in salary as we had to fund more special education units. Just the State budget to actual is \$1.6 million more in Division 1 funding for teachers.



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We are able to build interest back in to the budget. We are also able to build the 1/2 % increase in assessments. Also, anytime we have a match tax, like Brandywine, that number is included in their calculations per pupil. It will be expensive for us, as it will increase what we pay out to the charters, but it will also increase what other districts pay Red Clay for incoming students. We put \$2.7 million more in needs-based funding, offset by the decrease in DAP payment. It puts 24 positions for opportunity grants. The \$3 million for the State give back. It puts in the \$3.1 million for Division 1 salaries, includes the raise, steps, and additional unit positions we earn in the intense and complex.

There is transportation reimbursement for the savings we were making is included. That is \$300,000. The new CSI money is not in this as it was in the past. It is listed under the Federal budget.

For FY 2020 the budget is 3.9% above in actual for FY 2019. That is driven by the Opportunity funds and the tuition tax.

You increase your revenues and the expenses increase in the same categories. Division I increase salaries and steps/lanes. The same is true for local. Opportunity, Transportation as well. The reductions have to be reflected through as we receive the revenue but we still have the state give-back. It would be easier at some point if we don't go through this. In the last 5 years, the budget the budget has become more complicated to follow with the new funds and old reductions. They changed the transfers where you could see the revenue in and the expenses out. But there is issue with double booking. Rather than expensing the cost, the money simply disappears. The consortium is a good example. It looks like we have spent nothing, but it is a transfer out of funds.

Ms. Thompson stated that last year we budgeted \$50,000 for summer school and this year we are budgeting \$30,000. Is it because we came in \$25,000 under this year? Ms. Floore stated that summer school crosses the fiscal year. This is not the STEM or Special Education summer schools; this is the money we are collecting for credit recovery for the program that Ted Boyer ran. It is only for one program that collects a payment. It is not the mandatory program for 12-month eligible students funded by the district. It is not a reflection on what we pay for summer school. It is what we charge students and families for the classes and is break even.

Ms. Thompson asked why are we funding less in the resource teacher local match. Ms. Floore stated it was because we had a carryover in that match tax. We had the appropriation for match tax on K3 and K4 new funding; we budget for the full year salary. It takes a while to ramp up. The school year starts in September. New employees aren't paid until September. If we budget a full year, you will have extra at the end. We will spend more than what is listed, but we have the carryover to add to it.

Ms. Thompson stated that we know more students are attending charter schools as the charter payment has increased. Ms. Floore answered, yes and they are mandated to rise by the same percentage that the State has given. Our preload charge is 2% more. Part of our match will also be included in that calculation.



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Ms. Floore is budgeting an increase for related services contracts. This is in direct relation to the increase in eligible students. This is the PT, OT and Speech as well as Psychologists. \$1.2 million is the increase.

Total projected expenses are 5% over the final actual from FY 2019. This is a large increase. There are a number of items going into that. We are sensitive to the public's perception of are we controlling budget growth. We are controlling budget growth; however, there are investments that are being made at the State with opportunity funds for ELL and students in poverty as well as at the local level in seeing an increase in the number of special education students. Ms. Thompson added that it is not just the numbers of enrolled students but also the needs of those students. Ms. Floore agreed.

Mr. Chase asked if there is more talk regarding another unit student count possibly in January after the initial count. Ms. Floore explained that there has been legislation that was circulated yet it didn't get any traction. We are seeing children moving in who are intense and complex. Appoquinimink is seeing massive growth. We were more concerned with not simply growth but a unit count that allows us to accommodate by the needs of students. One intense or complex student could warrant another unit. Unfortunately, nothing happened. Ms. Zimmerman added that they can be open to both issues of the bill.

Looking at the pie chart, you can see the comparison of where the money is spent. 70% is teachers. EPER is for teaching staff. Custodial overtime would be in custodians. Central Admin is 3.8%, schools 6.3%, paraprofessionals 6.1% and custodians is 7% with clerical staff at 4%. Mr. Chase stated there is trouble not only hiring custodians but keeping them.

Ms. Floore gave two more action items. The Board will be voting on the Tax Rate tomorrow but not the Preliminary Budget. It is their practice to review the budget and vote on it the following meeting. The Tax Warrant is different as it has to be to the County by Thursday.

Mr. Chase asked if bus drivers are reported time. Ms. Floore stated they don't fall under reported time. It is complicated as half of them are contracted.

Ms. Rattenni asked if we have done a forecast for referendum, one or two years out. Ms. Floore explained that it is definitely not needed this year. In the future it depends. We had the three year forecast, but we had no way to anticipate the increase from the state. It would have been a different picture if there were more cuts. We did not know the State would put this money in or an increase in Match. She could do one but it would be a guess as to what the State budget would do next year. There's a chance we could go another year. And it is an election year. Ms. Rattenni stated they put some money in contingency as well. Ms. Zimmerman stated if it continues on this path, we'd go another year possibly. Ms. Floore added that the needs for tuition will still grow. They aren't



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going away. Our Debt Service continues to decrease so there may be the offset if tuition increases.

Ms. Thompson stated that the teachers are receiving a 2% increase from the State. What are we doing? Ms. Floore stated that in our negotiated contracts we negotiated a re-opener. Our third year is 1.5%. The secretaries and custodians received a specific dollar amount. The administration is the only one that did not receive anything. The recommendation is that it pass along the 2% on the State side and the 1.5% on the local side. Administration is not just the central administrators and principals, but includes technology and positions below custodians. It is who falls in the non-union category. Because these salaries are not State and Local, we meld it together and recommend 1.75%. 50% of salaries will get the State 2%. Ms. Thompson asked when the raises become effective. Ms. Floore stated it is retro to the first full pay period in July. It gets complicated when you have a pay cycle that crosses fiscal years.

Ms. Thompson asked about paraprofessionals. Ms. Floore answered it is the \$1,000 rather than the 2% on the state side. Which is more than the 2% would equal.

Ms. Rattenni asked for motion to approve the FY 2020 Tax Rate for \$2.308. Mr. Chase made the motion to approve the tax rate and Ms. Zimmerman seconded. The motion carried.

Ms. Rattenni asked for a motion to submit the FY 2020 Preliminary Budget. Mr. Chase made the motion to approve the Preliminary Budget and Ms. Zimmerman seconded. The motion carried.

V. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

VI. Announcements

Ms. Floore asked the group to come to the next meeting with ideas of presentations they would like to see in the new year. Ms. Zimmerman suggested Curriculum. Ms. Floore will ask Dr. Shaw. Ms. Thompson suggested something regarding central office staff as that is what the district is often criticized for. Ms. Floore stated that she has a report on the topic and will be happy to bring it to the Committee. Kevin Carson may be able to speak to that topic. Ms. Rattenni stated that December is Final Budget and we can work around that. Ms. Floore will ask Mr. Shaw to come in September as we have fewer reports to make in September. Ms. Thompson also suggested salary structure vs. other districts to see how we are competitive. She added that we lose teachers to other districts. Ms. Zimmerman added that maybe someone can tell us what plans we have to stop from losing teachers. Ms. Floore added that Chris Smith might be able to add information to that topic.

Ms. Rattenni asked about the possibility of moving the start of school back to after Labor Day. Other schools have done that this year. The County is always interested as they run



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summer camps. Those who start later, end later. Ms. Thompson explained they looked at that a few years ago. The Jewish holidays factored into it as they students wouldn't have a full week of school until the end of September plus it would add to the end of the school year. It would make a difference in the academics. Ms. Floore added that with the younger students, those early weeks are a great transition for them. The first week is organizational for the teachers and the students.

There will not be a meeting of the CFRC in August. The next meeting will be Tuesday September 10, 2019 in the Brandywine Springs Teachers' Lounge at 6:30 PM.