

**Work Session
March 21, 2022**

Opening

Call to Order

At 6:07 p.m. School Board President Michael Marasco called the March 21, 2022, Caesar Rodney School District Work Session to order.

Roll Call

Members present in addition to President Marasco were: Board Members: Mr. Dave Failing, and Dr. Joyce Denman. Vice President, Ms. Jessica Marelli and Mr. P. Scott Wilson were not present.

Adoption of Agenda and Addendum

Mr. Failing made a motion to adopt the March 21, 2022 agenda and addendum as presented. Dr. Denman seconded the motion and the motion carried 3-0 with two absent (Marasco, Denman, and Failing).

Presentations

Mr. David Zickerfoose, Hilton Bus Service (HBS), gave a presentation to the Board. They discussed labor shortages and wanted their buses to be put on an hourly rate. He stated they need to start recruiting drivers now for next year. The state formula is outdated. He shared if we offer what we offer now, we won't recover. HBS is suggesting a yearly salary instead of seasonal or part-time. They shared comparisons of local businesses and their starting salaries for employees. They also shared their findings on offering a yearly salary to drivers instead of them not being paid for time off such as the summer and other holiday breaks. A bonus attendance incentive was included. The cost to the district was also presented.

President Marasco asked for clarification on the local cost to the district. The differences in the formula options were reviewed. \$39,000 is the full compensation for the drivers which includes benefits.

Dr. Denman asked about a teacher's starting salary. Mrs. Amy Bonner, Director of Human Resources, stated this salary would be more than a paraprofessional would earn.

President Marasco inquired on what charter school drivers HBS have and if they were specific drivers for charter schools. Mr. Zickerfoose answered they are specific for the charter schools as they are used to driving the Wilmington area. They are experimenting with these drivers in two charter schools. He stated the younger drivers will take the medical insurance benefit. 90% of health care cost is given and an attendance bonus for those charter drivers as an incentive is included.

Dr. Denman asked about drivers working when they are actually sick to keep the attendance bonus. HBS stated backup drivers are available. \$16,900 is the current salary for a driver and this proposal would increase this to \$31,000 a year. Dr. Denman added this is doubling their salary. HBS stated once summer comes around the drivers collect unemployment and then we lose those drivers to other opportunities.

Having double runs vs. single runs was discussed as a comparison for full-time employment.

President Marasco asked what other school district responses are when asking for this increase. HBS is seeking this with three other districts along with the charter schools.

Mr. Failing stated offering a full-time job with benefits would change things. But these employees would need a specific amount of hours to receive healthcare benefits. He reviewed the breakdown of a full-time salary. He is concerned about what the CR community will allow. He knows we lose teachers and other employees to other jobs because of salary. This is a huge increase to ask for, but he understands the state formula is not

sufficient. He reminded the Board that we have offered full-time with benefits for our CR bus drivers working with Dr. Jason Bonner, Transportation Supervisor. Mr. Zickerfoose stated he needs this salary to be competitive and he doesn't want to go out of business or return the routes to the district. Discipline and Covid have been concerns. Mr. Failing added we understand we need to do something and there is a time concern.

Hilton Bus Service shared with this increase we can stabilize the transportation problem in the district. They thanked Dr. Bonner for helping with the bus routes.

President Marasco stated we changed our school bell times in the past and doubled up on bus runs. He asked for clarification on what runs Hilton currently has with our district. Examples of bus runs were shared. They are approximately five hours a day. The altered bells times are being considered. Changing bell times again would make this day even longer. Appoquinimink is currently looking at doing this. President Marasco asked for more ideas other than giving more money. HBS stated added assistance on the buses can help, but there are no more creative solutions to the problem. President Marasco asked if other districts are able to offer more compensation and CR does not, what would happen with the HBS bus contracts. Mr. Zickerfoose stated this would be a business decision at that time.

Mr. Failing stated we need to look at this in more detail. He doesn't see the discipline problem going away. Dr. Denman asked about including their busing for extracurricular activities. Mr. Failing stated that 30 hours versus 40 hours is something we need to continue to look into. The CR community is conservative. He added the Board is trying to do the right thing for the district. It goes back to what is best for our students. But he understands we also have to be competitive.

Discussion continued on the huge requirements for school bus drivers including securing the CDL license, drug testing, background checks, and other positions in the state. Driver recruitment and retention were also discussed.

Hilton Bus Service would like to continue this discussion further with the Board members.

Discussion Items

School Supports and Updates

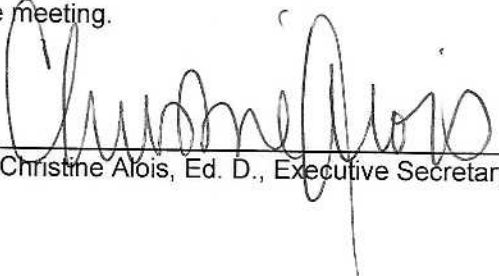
No updates were given.


Executive Session

At 6:58 p.m. Mr. Failing made a motion to go into Executive Session and to adjourn without returning to open session. Dr. Denman seconded the motion and the motion carried 3-0 with two absent (Marasco, Denman, and Failing).

Adjournment

At 9:07 p.m. President Marasco adjourned the meeting.


Christine Alois, Ed. D., Executive Secretary


Date

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